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ON TEACHING ENGLISH.

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ON

TEACHING ENGLISH:

WITH

DETAILED EXAMPLES,

AND AN ENQUIRY

INTO THE

DEFINITION OF POETRY.

BY

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PREFACE.

THE present volume is auxiliary to the enlarged edition of the author's *Rhetoric and English Composition*, the first part of which is published at the same time. It embraces principally the three following topics:—

First, a review of the prevailing opinions as to the proper mode of teaching English, together with a critical estimate of their respective merits. The handling of this part is of necessity controversial.

Second, a brief sketch of the Rhetorical method, followed by a series of Select Lessons on the leading Qualities of Style—Intellectual and Emotional. These are intended to be, as far as possible, intelligible by themselves; but they also serve as overflow examples to the course of Rhetoric in the expanded text-book.

Third, an enquiry into the Definition of Poetry, being one added to the many attempts to deal with this intractable question. The discussion is not meant to remain isolated, but to fall in with the treatment of rhetorical principles, both in theory and in practice.

The pretensions of the work, more especially as

regards the Lessons in the analysis and criticism of passages from our greatest authors, are necessarily ambitious; and need no little amount of justification and apology on the part of the author. All this, however, will find a more suitable place in the two rhetorical text-books themselves.

ABERDEEN, *January*, 1887.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

EXERCISES IN GRAMMAR.

THE USE OF SAXON WORDS.

	PAGE
Recommendation to prefer Saxon words to Classical,	1
Many Norman-French words equally popular with the Saxon,	2
Our literature shows no exclusive preference of Saxon,	<i>ib.</i>
Characteristic qualities of Saxon and Classical words respectively, ...	3

LESSONS ON ORDER OF WORDS.

The Analysis of Sentences has the disadvantage of overlooking the right order of the Sentence,	4
Examination of the Sentence with a view to the placing of qualifying words,	5

CHAPTER II.

HIGHER ENGLISH TEACHING.

PLURALITY OF THREADS.

Mistake in supposing Narrative an easy effort of composition,	8
Few Narratives confined to a single thread,	<i>ib.</i>
The same with Description and Exposition,	9
Sentence and Paragraph Structure with reference to plurality,	11
History made up of many strands,	13
Reason of foot-notes and parentheses,	14

CHOICE OF WRITERS.

	PAGE
The older writers have a diminishing interest from the wide propagation and adoption of their best passages,	15
Their defects as regards the teaching of style,	16
Perennial arts of composition exemplified by every great writer,	17
Alternation in teaching of correct with careless writers,	18
Examples from Shakespeare,	<i>ib.</i>
Defects of annotated editions of our classical authors,	19

WHAT THINGS TO OMIT.

What is left to the teacher in giving us a knowledge of the mother-tongue?	20
---	----

CHAPTER III.

HIGHER TEACHING.—CONTINUED.

In Composition, a double course is necessary,	23
--	----

ESSAY-WRITING.

Advantages of Essay-writing,	24
Serious objections counteracting the advantages,	25
Essentially an exercise in thought or knowledge,	<i>ib.</i>
The teacher not to exact what he has not led up to,	27
Situations wherein Essay-writing is valuable,	28
Obedience to a few simple rules,	29

PARAPHRASING.

Disadvantages of the prose paraphrase; has no connection with direct teaching,	31
---	----

CONVERSION OF POETRY INTO PROSE.

Use and abuse of prose equivalents for poetry,	33
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

HOW NOT TO DO IT.

BACON'S ESSAYS.

The Essays viewed as regards the matter or thought,	38
Disadvantage of want of order and coherence,	<i>ib.</i>

CONTENTS.

ix

	PAGE
Incoherence of treatment in the same Essay,	39
Re-grouping barred by the requirements of the Civil Service examination,	40
The Essays as employed for instruction in style,	41
Critical examination of individual Essays,	42

CHAPTER V.

INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES OF STYLE.

SELECT LESSONS.

Requirement of a complete system of Rhetoric, or the higher Composition,	48
Co-operating lesson through the criticism of passages from authors promiscuously arising,	49
Intellectual qualities enumerated,	<i>ib.</i>

Lesson I.

Example from Macaulay's <i>Settlement of Kenmare</i> :—detailed elucidation of Sentence and Paragraph structure,	50
---	----

Lesson II.

Example from Samuel Bailey:—Sentence and Paragraph structure continued,	61
Example from Professor Ferrier:—Management of a double subject by Antithesis and Balance,	70

Lesson III.

Example from Carlyle:—The rhetorical arts of Description, ...	74
Example with a view to show the arrangement of a Paragraph on the principle of greatest proximity of related topics,	79

CHAPTER VI.

EMOTIONAL QUALITIES OF STYLE.

SELECT LESSONS.

Current modes of poetical teaching by annotated texts of the poets, ...	85
Too much mere memory work,	87

	PAGE
Exercise in pointing out singularity in the use of words,	88
Shakespeare compared with himself. Illustrations of his emotional effects,	91
The Emotional Qualities of Style comprehensively stated,	96
The Scale of Emotions from the two extremes of the Malignant and the Amicable group,	99
Poetic Qualities generally,	101

Lesson I.

Fourth Canto of <i>Childe Harold</i> :—Examination for Figures of Speech, and Poetic arts generally,	102
Passage on the "Ocean":—The poetry of our malevolent emotions,	105
Campbell's <i>Ode to the Rainbow</i> :—Detailed examination for poetic qualities,	107

Lesson II.

Art emotions include the higher senses—Sight and Hearing, with numerous associated effects,	115
Shelley's <i>Ode to a Skylark</i> :—Minute illustration of the author's characteristics,	117
Comparison with Wordsworth's Odes on the Lark and the Cuckoo,	125
Logan's Ode on the Cuckoo,	120
Parallel between Shelley's Lark and Keats's Nightingale,	131
Gray's <i>Ode on the Pleasures arising from Vicissitude</i> ,	<i>ib.</i>
Poetic inversions illustrated. Use of co-ordinating adjectives. Choice and Harmony of Language. Employment of contrasts. Handling of the thought,	132

Lesson III.

Sublime of natural scenery,	145
Workings of our sense of Personality in regard to Nature-interest,	146
Coleridge's "Mont Blanc,"	147
Employment of bold figures,	<i>ib.</i>
Selection of Picturesque circumstances,	149
The perfect arrangement of words,	<i>ib.</i>
Diction suited for sublimity,	150
Comparison with Shelley's "Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni,"	151

	PAGE
Byron's Stanza on the Alps,	153
Personification operates under great departures from the literal human form,	<i>ib.</i>
Examination of passage from Paradise Lost—Satan rallying his fallen host,	154

Lesson IV.

The Quality of Pathos,	157
Pleasure derivable from the poetic handling of pain,	158
Tragical incident from "The Seasons,"	159
Question as to the redemption of the horror,	161
Survey of the Elegy of Gray, with reference to the pathetic treatment of Death,	162

Lesson V.

Interest of Character,	167
Two different modes of representing character in poetry:—Descriptive Epithets and Action,	169
Examples from the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales,	<i>ib.</i>
Description of the Clerke,	170
Milton's Mammon,	174
The Homeric Epithets,	175
Tennyson's description in "A dream of Fair Women,"	177
Chaucer's Miller and Prioress,	178

Lesson VI.

Poetical treatment of the power of Music,	179
Dryden's Ode on St. Cecilia's Day:—Detailed examination,	180
Dryden's second Ode known as "Alexander's Feast,"	189
Pope's Ode for the same festival compared,	190
Musical allusions in Milton, Shakespeare, and Wordsworth,	192

Lesson VII.

Examples of Pathos,	193
The Death of the Princess Charlotte:—Byron's episode in <i>Childe Harold</i> ,	194
Robert Hall's sermon on the same event,	200

	PAGE
Thomas Chalmers's sermon,	202
Comparison of the three,	203
Miscarriages of Pathos—Chalmers on Cruelty to animals,	204
Domestic Pathos in Cowper,	205
Pathos of Campbell's "Lord Ullin's Daughter," and the "Dying Gladiator,"	206

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEFINITION OF POETRY.

Recognised methods of arriving at the definition of general names,	207
Difficulties in the case of Poetry,	208
Employment of the method of Contrast,	209
Importance of arriving at a definition,	<i>ib.</i>
Review of different definitions,	210
Aristotle and Bacon; Wordsworth,	<i>ib.</i>
Interpretation of Nature,	211
Spiritualizing of Nature,	212
Criticism of Life—Matthew Arnold,	213
Imaginative heightening of matter of fact—Alfred Austin,	<i>ib.</i>
The definition of poetry preceded by that of Fine Art in general; the specifying circumstance being language,	215

FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE.

Art emotion without language is not poetry,	216
Ways that language operates in order to the poetical transformation,	217

CONTRASTS TO POETRY.

Contrast with SCIENCE,	219
ORATORY permits the use of pain,	221
Contrast with MORALITY and with RELIGION,	224

CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

Complications arising from the dependence of poetry on a subject.	
Inadmissible subjects,	225
NARRATIVE subjects the most frequent of any,	226
Intrinsic interest of many narratives,	227
Poetic treatment must be superadded,	228

CONTENTS.

xiii

	PAGE
DESCRIPTIVE subjects,	231
TRUTH as a subject,	232
Incompatibilities of Science and Poetry,	233
The poetic handling of MORALITY. Wordsworth's delineation of his aims as a poet,	236
RELIGION as a subject for poetry has various aspects ; Paradise Lost,	240

POETRY AS IDEAL.

Ideality contrasted with Reality,	243
Poets in all ages permitted to construct Ideals ; the Love passion, ...	244
The Realistic school still subject to laws of Art,	246
Condition of HARMONY,	248

VERSE.

Poetry supposes an elevation in the mental tone to which metre is suitable,	249
Verse does not make poetry without poetic figures and language, ...	251
Our literature has given birth to a species of elevated prose comparable to poetry,	<i>ib.</i>

THE PROSE ROMANCE.

Question as to the placing of The Prose Romance, or Novel, ...	253
Reasons for regarding it as included under poetry,	254
SUMMARY of the Chapter,	255

ON TEACHING ENGLISH.

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CHAPTER I.

EXERCISES IN GRAMMAR.

THE USE OF SAXON WORDS.

IT is still a frequent recommendation given to learners in composition to prefer, on all occasions, Saxon words to Classical. Now, to write continuously in anything like pure Saxon is plainly impossible. Moreover, none of our standard English authors, whether in prose or in poetry, have thought it a merit to be studiously Saxon in their vocabulary. Our greatest example is, of course, the Translation of the Bible,—where Saxon is used very largely, but not, apparently, from any set purpose. This, however, is a matter that we may count upon seeing thoroughly sifted before we are done with the criticisms of the Revised Version. I confine myself to a few remarks that lie on the surface, and yet suggest a conclusion at variance with the opinion that has been long in circulation.

After the Conquest, when Norman-French words entered our literature so extensively, a very great number got into use even

among the unlettered population, and were adopted as universal household words ; being, in fact, incorporated with the old vocabulary. Nobody thought of avoiding them in the name of Saxon purity. This can be said, with the utmost confidence, of the state of the language in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There was a mixed vocabulary of Saxon and French, the common property of the whole nation ; to be intelligible and popular, it was not necessary for any speaker or writer to affect Saxon words exclusively ; and I doubt if any one did so.

A few examples will suffice. The words face, sense, motion, change, voice, distance, reason, sum, difference, count, race, peace, secret, command, action, respect, temper, humility, virtue, vice,—were understood in every cottage and every artisan's shop, say in the year 1600. There were no very apt Saxon equivalents, and the words were appropriated as part and parcel of the dialect of the people.

It may be said this was all very natural and proper, but the French brought in many duplicates of existing terms, which, being superfluous, would be avoided by the simple, and foisted in by the affectation of the learned. There is, no doubt, some truth here, yet there is little evidence of those terms being steadily avoided by any of the writers, although some indulged them more freely than others. It will be enough if I illustrate the point from the Translation of the Bible.

While it would be easy to indicate numerous passages of very nearly pure Saxon, extending over several consecutive verses, there is no appearance of this being designed. What is aimed at (for the most part, but not without exceptions) was to use the intelligible and diffused vocabulary, whether Saxon or French. I do not think that there was even a very clear perception of the superior force of the Saxon, in cases where we should now reckon it superior. In the first verse of the book of Genesis, the translators might have written:—" In the beginning God *made out of nothing* the heavens and the earth".

And, next verse, they might have said:—"And the earth was *shapeless* and *empty* (for "without form and void"). But there is no evidence that they sought out pure Saxon words, when easy and well-known classical terms were at hand.

Again, a reference to Bunyan would show that, although the style is simple, there is no express aim at keeping to pure Saxon. It was enough for him that the words were felt and known to be household words. "Giant Despair's Castle" is a combination that never strikes him as being too learned. His "delectable mountains" could not be rendered into Saxon without loss. In common with the Bible he uses freely all the classical terms for religious doctrines, without considering whether they are simple or not.

The Shakesperian vocabulary includes all the resources of the language without bias or preference. The more elevated passages draw freely upon the classical stock; and a part of the humour of the clowns consists in their using terms too high for them. We certainly should not learn from Shakespeare's example to ape the old Saxon, or to avoid the newer source of our vocabulary. What was to hinder him from saying—"Shortness is the soul of wit".

A very easy induction soon teaches us that the Saxon is plain, homely, and expressive: it is suited to the qualities of pathos and humour. On the other hand, the Classical element gives us delicacy of discrimination, the power of compression, dignity, and oratorical flow, also a great extension of the vocabulary both of laudation and of vituperation. Our choice, therefore, is simply to be regulated by the occasion, and not by a determination to be Saxon at all hazards. Who would wish to change Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" into "Old Sailor"? What could we do without the word "Paradise"?

It seems to me doubtful whether enough has been made of the Saxon in purely pathetic style. Certainly, our poets do not

show much anxiety to secure it for that purpose. Take, for example, Pope's "Dying Christian".

Vital spark of heavenly flame,

might be

Living spark of heavenly fire,

without one classical word to disturb the harmony. All through the poem, classical words preponderate far beyond the necessities of the diction. But when we once admit one or two prominent classical terms, it is not worth while to Saxonize the rest. "Vital scintillation of celestial flame" would not be ridiculous in high oratory.

These few remarks are almost too obvious; yet, so prevalent is the superstition about keeping to Saxon, that I do not deem it superfluous to qualify that prescription by setting forth the discriminating circumstances. As to writing in pure Saxon style, or anything near it,—we should first sink the science and civilization of centuries, revoke the Conquest, and restore the Heptarchy.

LESSONS ON ORDER OF WORDS.

My second topic comes home more closely to the practical work of the school. It relates to the change made in Grammar by the introduction of the Analysis of Sentences. Teachers are in the habit of making the pupils tabulate the constituents of a sentence, according to the analysis; and this is so far well. There is, however, one disadvantage attending the practice—it takes the parts of the sentence out of their place, and withdraws the attention of the pupils from the order or arrangement of the words, which is a most vital circumstance in good English composition. What I propose is, that we should parse the sentence as it stands, taking notice, however, of the very same parts as we should put into the table; that is, combining the words into the phrases and clauses that are

taken up in the regular analysis. In doing this, we are to remark the position of all qualifying adjuncts, and to say whether they are placed in the best possible way. In fact, we should ring the changes on sentence-arrangements, and try to come at the best. An example is necessary here, and a very easy one will answer the purpose.

“In the conduct of life, the great matter is, to know beforehand what will please us, and what pleasure will hold out.”

This would be a very easy analysis on the tabulated plan. Without tabulation, take it to pieces thus:—First, we have the adverbial phrase, “In the conduct of life”. This qualifies the whole assertion. It is placed at the beginning, but I mean to raise the question whether, for better or for worse, it could be placed elsewhere. Then comes the subject of the sentence—“the great matter”; a noun qualified by the article, and an adjective. We shall leave it as it stands. Finally, we have the predicate of the sentence—“is to know beforehand what will please us, and what pleasure will hold out”—the verb “is,” with two completing circumstances, expressed by an infinitive “to know,” a qualifying adverb, “beforehand,” and a double object, “what will please us, and what pleasure will hold out”.

Now, let us ring the changes of order, and try the effect. The clause, “In the conduct of life,” could be placed in two other positions. “The great matter, *in the conduct of life*, is to know beforehand,” &c. This is one variation. The other is to put it at the end of the sentence. “The great matter is, to know beforehand what will please us, and what pleasure will hold out, *in the conduct of life*.” It will be felt at once that this last is an extremely awkward arrangement. The pupils, if appealed to, would at once reject it, whether or not they could embody their disapproval in reasons. The other variation would not strike them as bad; there might be a division of opinion, although a very little explanation, or a

little experience in the ordering of sentences, would probably decide the youngest in favour of the original form. You have only to familiarize them with one great principle of order,—namely, that qualifying words should always be kept as close as possible to the words meant to be qualified. Now the subject is, so to speak, qualified by its predicate, and the two should not be separated further than is absolutely unavoidable. To interpose an adverbial phrase is to violate this rule; and when the phrase can precede the subject, it is better.

So much for the choice of position for the adverbial phrase. The next choice is as to the order of subject and predicate. With the copula verb “is,” you are frequently at liberty to invert the order. In point of fact, it is inverted here; “the great matter” is really the predicate. And the regular order would be, “To know beforehand, &c., is the greater matter”. This is certainly not bad in itself, but is it as good as the present arrangement? I think not; but I do not trouble you with the reasons. I am merely arguing that you should submit to the judgment of your pupils various schemes of possible arrangement, and gradually make them feel the superiority of some to others, while there may be occasions where the reasons are equally balanced. I do not know any exercise, within the compass of grammar, more profitable than this. It no doubt rises beyond grammar, into considerations commonly included in rhetoric. But that does not signify; there is nothing abstruse even in the rhetorical reasons, and sooner or later we should bring them forward.

The rule of minimum separation of qualifying words from words qualified, covers half of all that belongs to the arrangement of sentences, and is singularly easy to apply. You may often have competing claims. Thus in the clause of the sentence quoted, “to know beforehand what will please us,” the verb is separated from its object by the adverb “beforehand”. Say, then, “to know what will please us beforehand”. The remedy

here is worse than the evil : "beforehand" also qualifies "to know," and it is removed by the distance of a whole clause ; whereas the object-clause was removed only by one word.

Great as is the importance of grammatical order in the placing of qualifying words, it is but a case of a much higher and more commanding necessity, which I will take as my first topic in the next chapter, and explain with all the emphasis I can give to it.

CHAPTER II.

HIGHER ENGLISH TEACHING.

PLURALITY OF THREADS.

IT is very common to talk of Narrative as one of the easiest efforts of composition. The elementary manuals usually dispose of it in a few pages. The whole art, it is commonly said, consists in following the order of events. In this, there are several oversights of enormous magnitude.

The first oversight is the fact, that very few narratives are confined to a single thread of events. The usual case is to have several trains of actions proceeding simultaneously. In a history, for example, there may be no less than ten or twelve different concurring streams.

The second oversight is, that, in a narrative, events are not only stated, but explained. The Prussians came up at Waterloo at a particular moment, and the fact may be brought forward in its order; but then the narrator introduces an explanatory narrative to show why they did not come sooner. But such explanations carry the narrative backward, or up the stream of time, instead of down. Moreover, all explanations and reasons break the narrative and distract the attention, and so interfere with the reader's conception of the events.

Take, again, Description. If we are giving the impressions that occur to us in marching through a town or a country, we may be said to be following a single thread; but if we attempt,

as we often do, to give a *coup d'œil*, we have to state a great many simultaneous impressions. But, for this, language is seemingly incompetent; we cannot express more than one thing at a time.

A similar difficulty occurs in Exposition. A general law cannot be understood without the particular cases, and the particular cases are but particular facts until they are embraced in the law. Indeed, it would be convenient if the particulars and the generality could be made simultaneously present to the mind; but this is not in the power of language. We must take one first, and hold that in unmeaning suspense till we are supplied with the other. Again, there are many laws, doctrines, or principles where the subject has a plurality of predicates. Thus the law of gravity has for its subject "matter," "all matter," "all material bodies"; and for its predicate these circumstances—namely, (1) attraction, (2) variation according to distance, (3) the law of the inverse square. Now, we cannot embrace all the three circumstances in one exemplification; we must take them in succession, the mind retaining a hold of the first and second respectively, until the third is presented.

Go back again now, for an instant, to the grammatical illustrations under the last head—the proper placing of qualifying words. In strictness, we should be able to take in a thing with all its qualifications at once; we have not the desired impression until we do so. In viewing an object of the outside world, we are simultaneously impressed with all its attributes; we take in size, form, colour, and any synchronous impressions of the other senses—sound, touch, odour, taste. To put us in the same position by verbal description, we ought to have an equally synchronous presentation of the names for all the qualities. "Her mouth was *small*, and, thereto, *soft* and *red*."

What I am now driving at may be shortly given thus.

Language is a single file ; the subject matter may be double, triple, or any number of files. Or, to put it pedantically, so as to impress the memory, language is *unilinear* ; matter may be *bilinear*, *trilinear*, or *polylinear*.

How different would be the whole art of composition if we could write and read in parallel columns, like a polyglot bible ! Our difficulties in placing our facts and statements would then not exist. In a great battle like Waterloo, if the writer could give a column of his page to every distinct movement going on at the same time, and if the reader could comprehend at one glance eight or ten columns of writing, the understanding of the battle would be an easy affair. So, the descent of our Queen from the Conqueror, the affluents of a great river, the blood-vessels and nerves of the animal body, would be child's play to a polylinear writer addressing a polylinear reader.

It is in the impossibility of saying more than one thing at a time that four-fifths of all the difficulties of writing have their source ; at least, after we have become fairly acquainted with the vocables and idioms of the language. From the first of our attempts to write an easy letter, to the last and most elaborate of our compositions, we are haunted by the difficulty of placing every fact in the best possible connection. A teacher that would smooth our way should be alive to this circumstance above all others. Although it is the least explicitly adverted to in rules regarding style, it presses harder upon us, in actual practice, than all other difficulties put together. Whether on the small scale of sentences and paragraphs, or on the great scale of an entire discourse, the getting of the ideas into good arrangement is our greatest anxiety. Indeed, it is a thing that can never be done to perfection ; it is an affair of compromise and the fewest evils ; and the man that is most successful in it is usually the most humble.

Of course, we have got into a conventional way of meeting the difficulty up to a certain point, and of being satisfied with

what seems possible and reasonable. We cannot get everything into the best conceivable place, and are content with the second, third, or tenth best—nobody being asked to do the impossible.

It is worth our while to extend the illustration in this matter, so as to see how often it constitutes our main obstacle in the act of composition.

In the making of a sentence, the point is pretty obvious, and has already been more than once hinted at. To bring the qualifying words as close as possible to their principals, to keep down the number of qualifying circumstances, to express them in as few words as possible when they are numerous—are well-known devices that would be superfluous to a polylinear mind. If you could spread out a long sentence into three columns abreast, and take these all in by a simultaneous glance, you could afford to introduce a very great number of circumstances, such as would overwhelm the strongest mind, constituted as we are. Limiting conditions, clauses of explanation, when in great number, render our sentences prolix and overloaded ; and, consequently, make bad style. The English teacher is of use in showing how the evil is to be met without sacrificing essential particulars. In doing so, he will have to point out that we are at last stopped by well-marked barriers ; that there are certain things not to be undertaken at all. He will show you sentences in Bishop Butler, for example, that the human mind, for various reasons, is not made to grapple with.

The paragraph structure repeats and intensifies all the difficulties now mentioned. The paragraph, indeed, is the microcosm of the discourse, and admits and demands a very extended study in any scheme of instruction in English.

Of course, you can make a very simple paragraph, if you are not tied down to a subject, or to a mode of treatment. You may leave out everything that gives any trouble in the

placing, or, if you cannot find room in one paragraph for whatever appears to belong to it, you may give an extra paragraph to embody the omissions. All this, however, is clumsy and embarrassing, and deprives you of the power of constructing a symmetrical and exhaustive discourse. The paragraph of arrears is an encumbrance to your forward march; besides which, it detaches topics from their proper bearings, whereby these lose their effect, or else burden the mind with the effort to connect them.

One of the commonest cases of paragraph complication is the case of a double subject; as in expounding a contrasting couple, say, plants and animals, savages and civilized men, youth and age, despotism and free government. The essential thing being close comparison, we cannot put the two members of the comparison into distinct paragraphs; at least, we lose very much in clearness by doing so. It would be a case for writing in two columns; and, indeed, the tabular form is often convenient, notwithstanding that we have not the power of reading two columns of a table at once, but must leap from one to the other in order to take in both.

Now, the conduct of a double subject is one of the strongest tests of a writer's power of exposition. Success does not depend on any single prescription; it requires the embodiment of a great number of arts—some of sentence structure and others of paragraph structure,—which I do not even attempt to enumerate.

This one instance is enough to show the occasions when the single file is put to its utmost strain in paragraph writing. The greater number of cases, however, would fall under some one or other of the styles of composition—narration, description, exposition. And, under these several styles, the difficulties due to plurality of subject could be exhibited at any length. A very few additional illustrations will suffice.

I have already adverted to some of the oversights com-

mitted in urging us to follow the order of events in narrative. I will now mention another limitation to the rule; namely this, that history is made up of many strands, and as each of these works according to laws of its own, we must, for the sake of connection of subject, follow out one and leave the others behind, to be brought up in their turn. Take the History of the Commonwealth. There is a political history in the fight of parties in the Legislature; there is a military history, while the war is going on; an ecclesiastical history, in the battles of sects and churches; a literary and scientific history, and many minor trains of incidents. Now, ever since history-writing was reduced to method, it has been the usage of historians to take each strand by itself for a certain length, and to keep exclusively to that, neglecting all contemporaneous events, except by explanatory allusion. The order of events would involve snatches of everything; a debate in the House of Commons, a march of the King's army or the Parliament army, a decision of the Westminster Assembly in an article of the Confession, the publication of one of Milton's controversial pamphlets, a diplomatic communication with a foreign Court; every one being thus detached from its antecedents in the same department. For, although all those things are going on together, there is a certain independence in the course of each. To give the history of the Westminster Assembly, you need not, except by passing allusion, refer to any of the political, military, and other incidents of the eventful seven years during which the Assembly sat. The motives that determined the settlement of religious doctrines lay in a sphere of their own; they followed laws of their own; and no principle of composition is more paramount than to discuss together things that are of a kindred nature, and to follow an unbroken thread of causation.

It has been pronounced impossible to write an adequate History of the Jesuits, because of the complicated relationships of the Order with so many different countries.

Thus it is that no large history can be written upon the strict rule of the order of events. It would be a very valuable *appendage* to every considerable history, to provide a skeleton chronology, where each important fact finds its place in the order of time, irrespective of the mixing of departments. It is not too late to edit some of our classical historians—such as Gibbon—and supply them with such a chronology. It would be a great help to the reader, who is apt to be perplexed by the numerous goings backward and forward in time, which the composition makes necessary. There is an independent interest in seeing what events were abreast of each other; and also an occasional aid to the understanding, from the fact, that things going on together may, and often must, influence one another more or less.

One other illustration from narrative may be adduced, namely, the use of foot-notes in writing. Cobbett, in his haste, denounced these as the mark of an incapable writer. Why are they necessary? Because you cannot find room for them in the text without breaking the thread inconveniently. They are what a bilinear writer would put in a second parallel column. You must of course pause to read them, but then, you understand that you must go back to the text, and view it in close continuity, just as if the notes did not exist. That is the only advantage of the separate printing.

Again, parentheses are an objection in good writing. They have exactly the same justification as notes. They are something that you would place outside your text if you could; something that the reader needs to take along with him, with the least possible break in the composition.

Once more. All readers of Carlyle are aware of his habit, in narrative especially, of making very abrupt exclamations. Now, if you will take the trouble to look at these closely, you will find that many of them are references backward or forward, with a view to explain some passing event; the abrupt-

ness and brevity is meant to have a parenthetic effect, and to give the smallest possible interruption to the current of the narrative. These, too, would be placed outside if there were a second column in the composition. (See Chap. V., Lesson III.)

CHOICE OF WRITERS.

A very difficult topic. It relates to the use to be made of our classical English writers in teaching English. This raises two distinct questions—one relating to the older writers, another to the newer.

The natural and proper veneration of the country for the great names of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, not to mention the host of their illustrious successors, is apt to disturb our judgment in fixing their place in early education ; and I think we are under some fallacious impressions respecting them. When an author is at once great and popular, when he is widely read by the nation, and closely studied by succeeding men of letters, his influence becomes detached from his own writings ; it flows through so many channels as to be felt without reading him. There is an anecdote very much in point. A certain old lady, ignorant of Shakespeare's own works, but not unread in miscellaneous literature, went to see one of the great Shakespearian dramas acted. At the end, she declared that *it was made up of quotations*. In fact, the great passages of *Macbeth* and *Richard III.* come across us all so often, that the interest of the original is reduced to the general plot, and to the second-rate and less hackneyed passages. The original is, to a great degree, though not entirely, superseded by the reproduction of the best passages in our most familiar reading. I do not say that it is superfluous to go back to a complete text, but I do say that the impress of the author's genius is not dependent on that exclusive source.*

* Even the Bible itself is not an exception to the remark, if we may judge from a work recently published, under the title—" *Gems from the Bible* : Being Selections Convenient for Reading to the Sick and Aged ".

Irrespective, then, of any question as to the superiority of Shakespeare and Milton, it cannot but be, that the greatest amount of unexhausted interest should attach to the more recent classics—the writings of those that have studied the greatest works of the past, that have reproduced many of their effects, as well as adding new strokes of genius; and our reading is naturally directed to them by preference. A canto of *Childe Harold* has not the genius of *Macbeth*, or of the second book of *Paradise Lost*, but it has more freshness of interest. This is as regards the reader of mature years, but it must be taken into account in the case of the youthful reader also.

It is the same with the older prose. The Essays of Bacon, which I shall have occasion again to refer to more particularly, do not interest this generation, in any proportion to the author's transcendent genius. They have passed into subsequent literature until their interest is exhausted, except from the occasional quaint felicity of the phrases. Bacon's maxims on the conduct of business are completely superseded by Sir Arthur Helps's Essay on the subject, simply because Sir Arthur absorbed all that was in Bacon, and augmented it by subsequent wisdom and experience. To make Bacon's original a text-book of the present day, whether for thought or for style, is to abolish the three intervening centuries.

So much as regards the decay of interest in the old classics. Next, as to their use in teaching style, or in exercising pupils in the practice of good composition. Here, too, I think, they labour under incurable defects. Their language is not our language; their best expressions are valuable as having the stamp of genius, and are quotable to all time, but we cannot work them into the tissue of our own familiar discourse. What, then, is to be gained by dwelling upon them, say, in an English lesson?

The kind of criticism usually expended on plays of Shakespeare, and portions of Milton, edited for the purpose of

English teaching, is not, I think, of the most profitable kind. Discussions of antiquarian grammar, idiom, and vocabulary ; changes in the use of particular words ; explanation of figurative allusions ; interpretations of doubtful passages—are of course not devoid of interest, but they cannot do much to assist the pupil in mastering the living English tongue. Very little attention is usually given to the author's merits and defects, which are equally conspicuous and equally instructive.

The comparison of sixteenth-century forms and idioms with nineteenth would, no doubt, be useful as impressing the language that we ourselves have to employ ; but it is not the most effective way of going to work. To learn present usage, we do not need to refer to old usages, except as furnishing an incidental explanation of some anomaly.

There are, however, perennial arts and devices of composition that are exemplified by every great writer in every language. The ordering and the structure of sentences and successions of sentences ; the numerous strokes of poetic effect ; the conditions of lucidity in narrative, description, or exposition—these are found everywhere. Examples of their successful application, and examples of corresponding failures, occur through the whole field of human literature. To study these is to go at once to the root of the matter ; and the only question is—Where shall we get them in greatest number and most apposite form ? Shakespeare abounds in great poetic strokes ; so far good. Many of them, however, are flashes of genius, which may be learned so as to quote them at second-hand, but cannot be imitated. How far does he provide us with a repertory of exemplifications of the arts that anyone can make use of ? Is he richer in instances of all the variety of literary situations than anybody else ? I am not clear that he is. Counting the disadvantage of his antiquated style and mannerism, which is unsuited to ourselves, I do not think that a play of Shakespeare is, for its quantity of matter, the richest field of

useful literary criticism. I maintain that, in the greatest of the plays, there are long portions that do not yield any very marked illustrations of either grammar or rhetoric. I believe that a text-book of literary and rhetorical analysis should contain many passages from Shakespeare, but not one of great length. The Mark Antony oration is, perhaps, about the longest continuous example; while there should be a great many little pickings of two or three lines.

For literary teaching, a great but careless genius can be best turned to account after the study of a careful and correct one. Pope, Cowper, and Gray would be preludes to Shakespeare. Care and correctness we may all learn, and our longest schooling should be with such as exemplify these communicable virtues. When we come to Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, we may find a useful exercise in noting their careless passages; in comparing them with themselves; in observing when and how they fall below their usual level. We mark some of their grander effects; we pass to occasions when these might have been realized, but are not. We judge their composition, not by a puny standard of our own, but by the standard that they themselves have taught us. An original genius does not always act up to his own teaching. Euclid nods as well as Homer. Newton occasionally fails, when compared with himself. These are our opportunities for showing how well we have imbibed their highest lessons.

To take an easy example of Shakespeare's Grammar—

Duncan *comes* here to-night.

Here *shall we sleep* to-night.

Now, we ask, which of these forms is right?—or are they both right? In either case, can we give any reason? The first would seem to be wrong, because futurity is expressed in a present tense. If, however, we hold that the present is the universal tense, and is capable of signifying futurity by means of an adverb of futurity, then there is a compliance with the law of

parsimony (which is often the rule of elegance in language) to attain the end by the simplest means, and to avoid needless duplication. All this may be wrong, but it is an exercise of judgment, and that is what the pupil needs to be put through.

I repeat that more good is to be gained by scattered examples than by going through an entire play of Shakespeare, two or three books of Milton, or a complete work of Pope, say the *Essay on Man*. Large portions illustrate nothing in particular, or nothing in want of illustration at the stage reached by our pupils. The author's peculiar effects and manner are found recurring, and the discussing of them becomes superfluous.

I by no means regard as useless the many excellent annotated editions of portions of our classic authors—Shakespearean plays, and so forth. I think, however, that their value is not in the schoolroom, but in the stage immediately following—the beginning of self-culture. In fact, they are most useful to readers of mature age. I have seldom had a greater treat than in perusing the annotations in Pattison's "Pope," including the *Essay on Man*, and the *Epistles*. But I do not regard either of these as schoolroom works. They are not exclusively addressed to the pupils of the English class, and I cannot point to any other class in our school system where they could come in suitably. They are a mixture of literary criticism, philosophy, ethics, and religion, which I do not object to in my miscellaneous reading, but should decidedly object to in the instruction of a class. Holding, as I do, strong views on the division of labour in teaching, I should disapprove of expounding so many diverse themes in that random fashion.

The beau-ideal English text-book, as I conceive it, is a selection from the great writers, determined by capability of illustrating points in style, such as we need to be indoctrinated into, before we commence reading on our own account. It lies between the old Reading book and the new Classical

Series ; the one being too limited, the other too voluminous. The Series is for the advanced pupil's private library, and for occasional reference by the teacher ; but it cannot as a whole be overtaken in a reasonable time, and a representative selection is not obtainable by its means.

WHAT THINGS TO OMIT.

It is in connection with English, that the question chiefly arises—What things may teachers pass over, as being eventually learned without being specially taught? Obviously, an acquaintance with the mother tongue is something that we cannot escape from. If it is our lot to pass through a tolerably wide education in general knowledge, we must be at the same time, for this reason alone, well versed in expression ; seeing that knowledge is conveyed to us in our own language, and, for the most part, by men able to convey their information in good English forms. Also, the same acquisition goes along with our incessant intercourse with our fellows, in all the relations of life ; every situation where language is employed contributing to our language stores.

If the language of intercourse, of business, of the communication of knowledge, were in every respect good ; if it answered all the ends of language as well as need be,—then I conceive an English teacher, as such, would be a superfluity. He would be justified only on the supposition that there was some inaptitude in the human mind to acquire and combine vocables in particular—that, although language was a thing that we had incessantly to practise, yet we did not take to it readily, and required, like the awkward squad of a regiment, to have times allotted for extra drill. This, however, is not our position as regards facility for learning language. We are, no doubt, very unequally constituted in this respect, and some of us would be none the worse for extra drill, merely to work up to the prevailing standard of verbal fluency. But, on the whole, I am

disposed to think that, if the language in use all around us were invariably of the choicest kind, always good and sufficient for its ends, our education in it need not be a separate discipline. Individuals making language a special business or profession would be educated under the auspices of those that followed the same profession ; preachers would be taught by preachers, pleaders by pleaders, poets by poets, and so on.

All this, however, supposes that by English scholarship is meant principally the power of expressing ourselves adequately on every occasion requiring us to employ our native tongue. This, although denied by many, is the position that I have uniformly occupied in connection with English teaching. The history and antiquities of the language I regard as of secondary and incidental importance. Occasionally, past history helps to account for present usage ; but we may speak and write correctly without being able to account for the origin of the received diction. Historical philology is a topic of general interest ; but circumstances must determine whether we can make room for it in a school curriculum ; it should be among optional subjects, while the power of English composition, if attainable by tuition, should rank among imperative subjects.

The question then is—What, as teachers, should we endeavour to aim at? If we are not wholly superseded by the pupils' own abundant opportunities of learning the use of their mother-tongue, what is left for us to do? What is there that would not be done at all, that would not be so well done or so quickly done, supposing our assistance withheld?

I can only repeat my conviction, already recorded, that the most effective part of the teacher's work, the thing that the pupils are least able to do for themselves, that they may pass their whole lives without doing—is to discriminate the good and the less good in composition, throughout all the grammatical and other circumstances that operate in style. Any one that is a copious reader, and has a good memory, will

gradually acquire wealth of diction ; but this must be a work of time,—little of it can be given in the school. The state of the case, however, is—that copious reading gives distracting usages ; to decide among these is a separate study. Our didactic literature does not contain all the ready helps that, perhaps, will one day exist for this end ; and, at the present moment, a good teacher is the best help of all. The pupils need to be progressively exercised in the work ; their judgment is sharpened by repeated acts of discrimination ; what might never occur to their spontaneous observation of style, is brought before them at an early stage, and governs their practice through life.

CHAPTER III.

HIGHER TEACHING—*Continued.*

IN Composition, as in Grammar, we need two courses of instruction, running side by side. The first is, a systematic course of principles, with appropriate examples; the second, a critical examination of texts, passages, or writings, as they occur in some of the good English authors. The two methods support and confirm each other, while either by itself is unsatisfactory. If there *are* principles of Composition, they ought to be set forth in systematic array, and not left to irregular and random presentation. On the other hand, unless we grapple with some continuous text, we can neither find adequate exemplification, nor give any assurance of the completeness of our theories.

I shall not directly raise any questions as to the completeness of this or that course of Rhetoric. Indirectly, the sufficiency or insufficiency of rhetorical theories will have to be adverted to. I mean to dwell chiefly on the merits of the various exercises that accompany the teaching of the Higher English. I shall have to consider, with some degree of minuteness, Essay Writing, Paraphrasing, and turning Poetry into Prose.

ESSAY WRITING.

In Composition manuals, Essay Writing usually occupies a very large space. Examples of Essay themes are given in great profusion. Under some of the most celebrated and

successful teachers, as Jardine, of Glasgow, the pupils were kept incessantly at work in Composition; and, of course, to make pupils work somehow is an essential of good teaching. Let us then view the matter on all sides.

In favour of Essay Writing we can say that it makes the pupils develop their own powers, such as they are at the time. It turns their resources to account, and often surprises themselves with the results. They feel that they can do something, and are encouraged to go on exerting their capabilities. Writing is notoriously more prolific, more inventive, than mere discourse. The remark is often made, that a man does not know what he can do till he has a pen in his hand.

Again, to make a good essay, the pupils have often to extend their knowledge by special study or research; the benefit of which is apparent. Still farther, the essay puts in practice what has been already taught, and in such a form as to show the effect of the teaching. It does, however, much more—and this is a weak side as well as a strong: it tests the pupil's mental quality and resources over a wide compass. For which reason, it is one of the appropriate exercises in competitive examinations, when education is finished, and the struggle of professional life is to commence. But here, too, there are disadvantages, when we have to make a close comparison among a large number of candidates. Every one that has had to examine essays for competitive appointments, knows the exceeding difficulty of assigning marks to an exercise whose merits and demerits take so many directions at once.

Lastly, I must not neglect to add, that the prescription of essays can be made a very easy task to the teacher. He can easily prescribe a topic for an essay, and let the pupils do the best they can; troubling himself very little about how they do it. Like indiscriminate committing to memory, it ranks among the crude devices of the infancy of the education art. Even

when costing almost nothing to the teacher, it is not without effect on the learner.

Against the practice, there are, I conceive, very powerful considerations, some of them arising out of these very advantages. The comprehensive objection is, that it passes beyond the true province of the English teacher.

To write an essay may be an exercise of style, but it is something more ; it is an exercise in knowledge or in thought. The pupils have not merely to express something in language, they have also, on certain hints supplied, to find the matter to be expressed. It may happen that this is easy ; something so very familiar may be suggested as a topic, that no one can have any difficulty in finding what to say. On the other hand, the topic may be, and often is, far beyond the ability of the pupils at the time ; hence the work is often very ill done. But, whether it be the one or the other, the lesson is a mixed exercise, partly of thought and partly of style ; and mixed exercises are to be avoided in teaching. If there is any principle in education more sacred than another, it is to do one definite thing at a time. The advantages of such a course ought to be above the need of proof. The reason is not simply that the mind should be concentrated on one single subject of study ; it is, farther, that you cannot carry on two subjects abreast, and make them both consecutive, or observe the natural course from elementary to difficult. If you follow the proper order for the one, you cannot be sure that the other will bend to that order. I have always maintained that you can hardly ever make the same text-book a convenient basis for both language and thought : in like manner, you cannot frame a series of essays that will be consecutive, both as regards subject, and as regards language or expression. Besides, if there is any division of labour in teaching at all, the English master is not expected to do everything, or at least at the same time. Other masters are pro-

bably at work, teaching History, Geography, Science, and so on; or, if the same master teaches both English and some of these, he does so at different times, in different classes. He has an appointed hour for what he calls English Composition, and others for knowledge studies. I contend that Essay or Theme Writing is far more appropriate as an exercise of a knowledge class than as an exercise of a language class. The first use of such themes is to test knowledge and thought, to show whether the teaching of a given subject has been effectual; the expression is, for the most part, a secondary use.

Consider well this fact:—If a teacher prescribes an essay with a view to style, he gives the subject, but he cannot give even the general treatment, far less the modes of expression. The pupils must choose their own treatment, according to the state of their knowledge at the time; they must, in like manner, choose their own expression, which necessarily depends upon what they have to express. And when a whole class is set to work to write a theme, although the subject may be one, the handling must be as various as the individuals. How, then, is the teacher to deal with the results? Not only must he take the essays individually, if he overhauls them anyhow; he must, in his criticizing, be led into a wide range of points of style, these being brought up out of all order and connection, and without reference to the fitness of the pupils to comprehend them.

It will be allowed, I suppose, that, in teaching a foreign language, essays on themes could not be tolerated, or take the place of the system of prescribing passages to be translated from, and into, the language. I do not think that the case is much altered with our own language, unless it be that we can find so little to do in expression proper, that we need to add to the work by throwing in a lesson of knowledge or of thought. I assume, therefore, that the great desideratum is to provide the teacher with some profitable occupation in dealing with the

expression, properly so called ; and this has been one main object that I have striven after in my own teaching.

I must dwell a little longer upon that great principle of teaching that the Essay system violates—the principle of concentrating attention upon a single purpose, which purpose may thereby be followed out methodically and definitely, without being trammelled with any extraneous pursuit. I hold to this principle, in a still severer view of it—namely, that the teacher should not ask the pupil to do anything that he himself has not led up to,—has not clearly paved the way for. The pupils should not be called upon for any species of work that may not have been fully explained beforehand—that their own faculties, co-operating with each one's known attainments, are not perfectly competent to execute. A learner should not be asked even to show off what he can do, outside the teaching of the class. What would a mathematical teacher say, if a pupil gave in a versified demonstration of a geometrical theorem, or accompanied it by an exhortation to follow truth at all hazards? If you depart ever so little from the principle of testing pupils on your own teaching, and on nothing beyond, you open the door for any amount of abuse. Now, it is plain that the English teacher can give no preparation for essay themes, such as are usually exemplified in the books. How is he to lead a class up to the point requisite for discussing the relative benefits of Solitude and Society, the dependence of the Mind on the Body, the Choice of a Profession, the Virtue of Frugality, the Pleasures of Imagination, the Influence of Climate on National Character, Humanity to the Lower Animals?

If any effect at all is produced by such attempts, it is to inspire the young with a precocious conceit of their own powers. An essay on "Wisdom for a Man's Self," or on the proportion that should hold between a man's regard for self and his regard for others, may be very well in the hands of Bacon ; but

what is it in the hands of a boy or girl of fifteen, who must either follow some one authority, or parrot the commonplaces, believing that by their own intellectual force they have solved the mightiest problem in the conduct of life ?

It would be a great mistake in any master to put forward themes for Composition in the very miscellaneous order of our Composition books. The art of education has surely gone beyond the point when such a system, either of imparting knowledge or of disciplining the mind, can be justified in any way. As a special education in the power of writing English, it is still less justifiable.

There are various situations, easy to be assigned, wherein Essay Writing is a valuable adjunct to study. After the pupils have gone through a considerable range of instruction and training, they should certainly try their hand at original composition. Should they have the advantage of a private tutor, or some elder adviser, to look over the work and point out its defects, they will be in the right way to mental improvement. Writing essays to be read at a society, or by friends of one's own standing, is also a great means of culture. But, obviously, this is a quite different situation from being in a class of twenty to forty, all subjected to a common drill, where the teacher must prescribe some definite and very limited task, and confine his attention to the performance of that task, allowing no digressions whatever.

Some of our Manual writers begin their Essay course by supplying ample details, so as to leave nothing to the pupils but the expression. In the end, however, they think that the pupils can dispense with these details, as if, in the course of fifty or a hundred theme exercises, the pupil had amassed all knowledge ; as if the knowing of one piece of biography, of art, or of science, involved the knowing of any other.

A few simple rules of Essay Writing might be supplied, such as might serve to curb the lawlessness so often exem-

plified in the Essays of young pupils. If the subject is "Good Temper," precautions ought to be taken against such a piece of work as the following :—

Good temper is one of the choicest gifts given to man. It acts as the sunshine of life, and its effects, both on the possessor and his surroundings, are patent. Trials and cares and crosses are the constant attendants of life, but the man of good temper meets them all calmly enough. He is disposed to look at the fair side of everything. A man in good temper usually has a kindly word for others, a thing which materially lightens and assists in the performance of daily business. A man out of temper is to be avoided ; he is as testy and disagreeable as he can well be. Everybody coming in contact with him is made to feel miserable, and derives no benefit from intercourse with him. Good temper is an inward feeling which has the power to make one content with his lot, and silence all grumblings and complaints (which would otherwise arise) against the much-abused "fate". A person possessed of a good temper is usually one who has a sympathetic ear and can listen to the trials of others, and offer them consolation without thinking too much of the doing of it. Good temper is a gift of which all may be proud—patricians and plebeians alike. It acts somewhat like the philosopher's famous stone, turning all it comes in contact with into a like condition with itself. Good temper, like contentment, has the power of placing the humblest born, in some respects, in conditions superior to those of kings.

This is in several respects a very unsuitable theme for young pupils. It is a subject that has two different lines of treatment, the one scientific, or expository, the other ethical or hortatory. The writer should be tied down to one or other : or, if both are to be allowed, the scientific should come first, as the basis of the ethical. But without going so deep into the laws of method, we should insist upon at least one propriety of an Essay of this class, namely, to begin by defining the subject. This alone would prevent some of the worst faults of Essay-writing : it would assist invention, and be some security for arrangement. By separating Essay Themes into the several classes—Descriptive, Narrative, Expository, Persuasive,—certain broad lines might be drawn under each, and it would be enough if pupils were disciplined to follow those lines, whatever might

be the compass of their ideas and language at the time. Form and Method can be taught by a direct operation; ideas and language are the indirect and gradual outcome of all the collective influences at work on the individual.

PARAPHRASING.

Paraphrasing may mean simply the changing of a passage from one form of words to another, but it usually implies some degree of expansion in the statement.

This must be admitted to be purely an exercise in language or expression, and therefore suitable to the English teacher as such. It may, however, be conducted more or less successfully. The abuse of the practice in former days (chiefly with the Scripture commentators) is permanently shown by the ill odour attaching to the word "paraphrastic". Our Inspectors of Schools prescribe it largely, but the result is not always satisfactory, if we may judge from what we find in the reports. Thus :—

"One Inspector states that in his district Paraphrasing is partly a verbatim copy of the originals and partly a mass of absurdities; another, that the attempts at paraphrase are almost impossible to pass; a third, that very few of the candidates have a clear idea of what is meant by a paraphrase."

Exercises in Paraphrasing usually include turning poetry into prose; but, as I mean to handle this topic apart, I speak at present of Prose Paraphrasing—the conversion of one prose passage into an equivalent one, with or without expansion.

Of structural equivalents, such as inversion of order, grammatical changes, and transpositions of parts, I have the highest opinion as an exercise eminently appropriate to the English class. I shall state, before I am done, what I consider the precautions and requisites to be observed in conducting it. This, however, is not the chief thing in Paraphrasing, as usually set forth. It implies that the pupils shall express the

idea of the passage in different words, of their own choosing, so as to test their mastery of the English vocabulary.

Now, while the Paraphrase is free from the objections to the Essay, and is much more germane to the English teacher's province, it is still liable to come into conflict with the great principle of teaching already invoked; it does not call the pupils to account for the matters actually imparted in teaching. This remark applies to it, without qualification, when it is purely an exercise of varying the phraseology of the passage prescribed; in short, when it is an affair of providing synonyms for a given thought.

To illustrate the point, I may first refer to the position of the teacher of a foreign language. Under him, the pupil has to learn everything; his mind is supposed to be a *tabula rasa* as regards both grammar and vocables. Accordingly, the teacher is aware at any moment how many vocables his class may have learnt; he can put an exercise that shall involve these and no others. In reading a sentence in Cæsar, the Latin master can ask for a different rendering of the meaning, and he knows what to expect; if he asks for any equivalents that have not come up in the previous class work, he is distinctly at fault—reaping where he has not sown.

The case is totally different with the English master. He is nowise responsible for his pupil's vocabulary; he has done very little to furnish it, he has had no consecutive exercises with that view. He imparts a command of words only in an incidental way, and in fact is doing much less than the knowledge teachers, who, in communicating information are also communicating words or diction for expressing that information. I say, therefore, that when, in an English lesson, you ask a thought to be expressed in a variety of phraseology, you are prescribing an operation that is not in the proper course of teaching. You have not yourself imparted the requisite variations of language; you have not arranged, and cannot arrange

a series of instructions, such that the demand for a free paraphrase in a changed vocabulary is their legitimate following up. Suppose you yourself lead off with a number of examples of paraphrasing. After twenty, or fifty, or a hundred instances, the pupil may be as much at fault with your new case as if you had done nothing. The making up of one paraphrase is not any help to the next. You ask a class to paraphrase, "Life is short, art is long". Their efforts and their success have nothing to do with your teaching, but with the whole series of instructions that have contributed to their vocabulary, from their first imitation of their mothers' talk to the present hour; you are calling them to account for other people's work, and not for your own; by which, in my judgment, you are placed in an utterly wrong position. Nevertheless, let us suppose that they make some attempts to paraphrase the theme prescribed: you listen to these attempts, and then, probably, you would supply your own version, which I shall assume to be something very much to the purpose; and that they will remember this for a future occasion. Well, then, if ever they want to ring changes on the expression of the same theme, what you have done will be of service to them. But it will not be of avail for any other subject. You give them next an apophthegm from Bacon, "Reading makes a full man," and so on. They have here to begin *de novo*. They are thrown upon an entirely different department of their accumulated vocabulary; and it is equally a matter of chance, or rather a matter depending on the general compass of that vocabulary as a whole, whether they can ring any good changes upon these words. In fact, you plunge yourself into a quagmire; each step is a new and distinct effort; there is no such thing as clearing a path for further progress. You are off the rails of consecutive teaching, and no conceivable management can put you right.

The downward paraphrase, the degradation of a piece of writing for the sake of an exercise of change, is, I take it, the

precise opposite of what the teacher should aim at all through. He should be occupied in rising from worse to better—his motto is *Excelsior*. When he cannot improve a passage, he should leave it untouched, merely calling attention to the fact. If he can produce an equivalent of the same merit, so far well. If he can only degrade, he should do nothing.

CONVERSION OF POETRY INTO PROSE.

This is a mode of paraphrasing that has some specialities now to be noticed. It has the advantage of being more limited in scope than the Prose Paraphrase. The intention is to make no more change than is necessary for sober prose. A strong metaphor is reduced to its more homely equivalent; an inversion is restored, everything being left that would pass muster in ordinary prose. The amount of change thus varies with the poetic elevation of the style. Many passages need little more than to be altered from the typography of verse, while the higher poetry needs an entirely new rendering.

The following example is given in Dalglish's *Composition* :—

I envy not in any mood,
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within a cage
That never knew the summer woods.

Here is the paraphrase :—

I can only despise the indifference of those who, never having enjoyed the sweets of freedom, cannot sorrow for its loss.

This is what we may call a very free paraphrase, involving an entire change of diction, and assuming that the pupil has such a command of our general vocabulary as cannot belong to a pupil in the most advanced English class. But, further, it is thoroughly prosaic. Now, our language allows prose to be written in a style of elevation approaching the purest poetry.

Why might not the transformation descend to this, and no further? For example—

In no mood do I envy the captive that does not resent imprisonment—the linnet that never knew the summer woods, and is happy in the cage where it was born.

There is something repugnant in an operation that degrades and destroys a piece of composition, merely for the sake of an exercise in transforming it into other words. The passage is supposed to be conceived and executed for poetry alone; if so, it has no adequate prose equivalent—nothing but a coarse, disintegrated version, where the main idea is divorced from the form that is most appropriate for expressing it.

Two of the stanzas of Campbell's *Hohenlinden* have been paraphrased as follows :—

The soldiers, roused by the sound of the bugle, were arranged by the light of torches, and unsheathing their swords, stood ready for the fray, while the war-horse gave signs of eagerness to enjoy the terrible sport of battle. Then while the surrounding heights re-echoed the pealing thunder, the cavalry charged; and, as the sound of cannon drowned the thunders of nature, the flash of the guns vied with the lightning.

I doubt whether an ordinary pupil could make as unexceptionable a paraphrase as this; and yet it is wholly aimless. It has stripped the passage of its poetical beauty, and has not made a good piece of prose. It is an operation without assignable result.

Pope's famous line on Bacon—

The wisest, brightest, meanest, of mankind—
could be made into allowable prose, by the use of conjunctions:—“The wisest and the brightest, and withal the meanest, of mankind”: “Of mankind, the wisest and the brightest, and yet the meanest”.

As a theme for an Essay or Paraphrase, nothing could be more appropriate than the lines 52-6 in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, beginning—

Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit.

It would not be difficult to convert this passage into readable prose ; still it would be a considerable stretch of one's powers of style to make the conversion in the best form. Very few pupils in an English class could do it. They could only make an approximation, to be improved upon by the master. Now, my contention is that the plan of operating upon a prose passage is far preferable as a composition exercise. The poets should be imbibed in their own dress and character; and criticism upon them should principally have reference to the standard of poetry.

There is an exercise that may be made to fall under this head, namely, to take the poet's theme, and write a prose essay upon it, choosing entirely new language as well as new illustrations. This, however, is not either a paraphrase or the conversion of poetry into prose.

Almost the only useful mode of giving prose equivalents for poetry, is to point out changes of language and of order that would have to be made to suit the prose form ; including a revocation of all licences that may have been caused by the necessities of metre and the elevation of the strain. This would test the reality of the poetic form in the special case. Much of Shakespeare would turn to a stately prose, with the very smallest change. The fall of Wolsey scarcely differs from prose. In the first and second lines, the order is not the best for emphasis. It might have been—"To all my greatness, farewell, a long farewell". In line second, we should say—"The state of man *is this*". The next is pure prose.

Take Campbell's couplet—

Without the smile from partial beauty won,
Oh, what were man ? a world without a sun.

There is a licence here in the word "partial" placed as a co-ordinating adjective before beauty, for the sake of compactness. It is ambiguous, if not misleading : it is apt to suggest some one not wholly but *in part* beautiful, and would not be

good in prose. Surrendering the effects of the versification, and seeking the full propriety of the language, we should have to say—"But for the smile of beauty's favours". In the second line, we could but drop the figure of interrogation, and say—"man were a world without a sun". We might indeed go farther and dispense with the bold similitude,—“man would be a wretched creature,” but this is merely an exercise in synonymous expressions.

I shall have to illustrate fully what I consider the best of all exercises upon poetry, namely, the examination of the structure, with a view to mark poetic excellences and defects; under which will be included the contrast with prose forms, whenever anything hinges upon that contrast.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW NOT TO DO IT.

BACON'S ESSAYS.

AMONG the questionable modes of endeavouring to teach English, I would include the use of a work of some great English author, which the pupil is made to go through steadily, being exercised at once on the thoughts and on the style.

Much depends on the author chosen ; yet, in any case, I hold there is a violation of the principle of division of labour in teaching. As we should not comprise in the same lesson Greek and Euclid, Singing and French, so we ought to keep separate what strictly concerns English Composition from History, Politics, Ethics, or Theology. We cannot, of course, inculcate good English diction without referring to English writers, and every writer must treat of a subject ; still, while we are engaged upon the diction, it is our duty to leave the subject out of account. I am speaking at present of prose writers ; the remark would have to be modified for poetry.

As the method that I now impugn has a strong hold on our present teaching practice, I shall consider it at some length by taking up a distinguished example of the works usually prescribed—I mean “Bacon's Essays”.

The handling of this example will carry us a little beyond

our proper subject; for I shall have to call in question the suitability of the work as an instrument of teaching, both in thought and in language.

Nothing but the habit of working upon venerated texts could explain the selection of "Bacon's Essays" as a medium of instruction in the very varied themes that they embrace. Great as the work is in many ways, its greatness does not seem to me to adapt it for this special function. Let us look at it in detail—first as regards the matter, and next as regards the style.

Sixty themes, or thereby, are handled in these Essays. The subjects are so miscellaneous as to admit neither of classification nor of orderly sequence. A good many could be embraced under the prudential part of Ethics; as many, or more, are connected with Politics, Administration, and Business; many are on purely isolated topics, as Truth, Death, Studies, Health, etc. In only one instance that I can discover, are three related topics placed in sequence, *viz.*, Praise, Vain-glory, Honour and Reputation (53, 54, 55); not often are two connected subjects taken together, as Beauty (43), Deformity (44). The handling in all of them is suggestive rather than exhaustive; they exemplify, as Whately remarks, the original meaning of the essay,—*viz.*, a slight sketch, brief hints, loose thoughts without order.

The quantity of strong sense compressed into a narrow compass, the pith and brilliancy of the language, and the fame of the author, have made these Essays an English classic of the first rank. But the question before us is—How far is the work fitted to be a text-book in the instruction of youth?

Let us consider the Essays, then, as regards the matter or the thought. In this aspect, they labour under one great and obvious disadvantage, namely, the want of order and coherence. If a teacher were to put before a class the various subjects treated of, according to the printed arrangement of the

Essays, surely the teaching would be considered very strange. One day he invites the pupils to go over certain matters connected with Truth ; the next day they are to meditate on Death ; the day following an hour is to be given to Unity in Religion ; after which would come up Revenge. If consecutiveness in teaching has any merit at all, such merit is entirely wanting here.

It would, however, be possible to improve upon this order by a judicious selection,—in fact, by making an entirely new arrangement. “Truth” might be coupled with “Simulation and Dissimulation” and “Cunning”. This might have been done once for all in an edition prepared for schools. Yet it is apparent that the author himself did not aim at any connection between one essay and another, even when they were in the same circle of ideas.

This single circumstance seems to me to disqualify the work for being a text-book in teaching youth. It is my opinion that such desultory handling is radically opposed to the first principles of good teaching. If you bring forward so vital a subject as “Truth,” you should dwell upon it long enough to make some clear and definite impression. For this end it should fall into some larger scheme or programme ; it should be in juxtaposition with allied themes.

Another disqualification is the incoherence of the treatment in the same essay. The essay on “Truth” takes in at once the search after truth in science, and truthfulness or veracity in conduct. The one belongs to logic, the other to ethics. The treatment in both cases has been superseded many times over.

Taking the Essays for what they profess to be—hints, suggestions, starting-points for thought,—the teacher might follow out each theme in his own way, and give a more complete handling of the several topics. Whately wrote a large volume of such comments. In so far as you do this, however,

you make yourself the real instructor, and would do still better by taking a much greater licence—by discussing the several subjects in the very best manner, with the assistance of every light, instead of tying yourself to Bacon in particular.

While the skilful teacher might do something to remedy the defects now mentioned, his good intentions are likely to be frustrated by the tyranny of examinations. When, as in the India Civil Service paper for this year (1882), under English Literature there is presented Bacon's Essays, 1-30, the teacher's course is chalked out for him. He cannot group the Essays on related subjects, combining, for example, the 27th ("Friendship") with the 48th ("Followers and Friends"), because that would lead him out of the prescription. He cannot make up for the deficiencies of treatment by additions of his own, because the examiner would not recognize such; he can do nothing but grind up Bacon's thoughts exactly as put by himself, with all their crudity and incoherence. The examiner himself is necessarily under restraint; he must keep closely to the text, in justice to the candidates generally; so that, neither by him, nor by the teacher, can any consideration be entertained as to the best way of making Bacon's thoughts really useful to a student. If the Civil Service Commissioners had prescribed a selection from the Essays, embracing those that bear upon Politics, Administration, and Business, the path of the pupil would have lain through a more fertile region for their purpose. But this would have led them still further—namely, to supersede the Essays altogether by more modern and better connected treatises.

The judicious teacher would skip the topics that were wholly unsuited to youths of fifteen or sixteen, as those of "Parents and Children," of "Marriage and Single Life," of "Youth and Age"; he would also pass over subjects that ought not to be introduced at all, unless with ample opportunity for doing them justice; but he is not allowed such dis-

cretion. The pupil must go up prepared to give a scrappy answer to a scrappy question—on Atheism, on Seditions and Troubles, on Wisdom for a Man's Self, and so on.

Where Bacon shifts his ground, and brings in, under the same title, topics belonging to different departments, as in "Truth," it might be an exercise in discrimination to point out the incoherence; but this cannot be done by pupils ignorant of the subjects; and if the master were to point it out in one case, they would be no better prepared for the next. In Dr. Abbot's admirable edition of the Essays there is a very good analysis of each, which would greatly assist the pupil in the prospect of an examination, but only makes more glaring the jumble in the sequence of ideas. Surely if the subject of Anger is to be made a topic of instruction, there may be found in a score of treatises something far more to the purpose than Bacon's fifty-seventh Essay.

These are some of the objections to the use of the Essays as a means of instruction in knowledge or thought. It is a clear principle of good teaching that a subject should be methodically laid out, and brought consecutively before the minds of the pupils, occupying their exclusive attention for a series of lessons. Also, when a text-book is used, that book should be full and complete, not scrappy and suggestive; it should not leave everything at the mercy of the teacher, he himself being at the mercy of the examiner.

Let us next consider how far the Essays can be employed for instruction in English style. From the notes to Dr. Abbot's edition we can see the lines that he would lay down for the teacher. These notes are chiefly verbal. They take notice of the peculiarities of Bacon's phraseology, explain his archaic usages, and elucidate his verbal obscurities. There is no consideration of the merits or demerits of his style, considered as a model for imitation, or a source of expression to

the student of our own day. The profuse and accurate learning thus displayed may have a value as philology or as history, but it adds nothing to the power "of speaking one's own language well, and being a master of it"; of which Locke says, "Let a man's calling be what it will, it cannot but be worth our taking some pains in it". Very few of Dr. Abbot's criticisms appear to have any bearing on the present use of the English language, which I take to be the first requirement of any instruction coming under the title of "English composition". The value attached to the past history of the language must be estimated under some other head; and its claims to a place in our school curriculum decided on separate grounds.

I will now point out what I should consider the mode of handling the Essays, as an exercise of English style. Take first the Essay on "Truth". The first sentence—"What is truth?" said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer"—might be cited as an interesting way of announcing the topic of an Essay, while the phraseology would be open to improvement. For "said" he ought to have used the word "asked"; but the remark is superfluous, because no one would now commit the impropriety. The "and" should clearly be "but". "'What is truth?' asked jesting Pilate, but would not stay for an answer." The second sentence is a very long one, admitting of many emendations; but the same remark applies over and over again to Bacon's composition. Its defects are not the defects even of a beginner in the present day, and there is seldom anything gained by dwelling upon them. What I think this Essay might be turned to account for, in modern teaching, is the use of figurative language, which Bacon employs so largely, and often so happily. The present Essay contains examples of the use and abuse of similes, and might be examined with that view, leaving the question still open whether other and better examples might not be laid hold

of. Thus, "This same truth is a naked and open daylight [mixture of metaphors] that doth not show the masques, and mummeries, and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-light". The merit of a simile for exposition is its appropriateness; but whether the contrast of truth and error is well illustrated by the difference between daylight and candlelight is very problematical. So in the next sentence: "Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights". So uncertain is the bearing of such comparisons, that I would rather not distract the minds of young pupils by trying to explain it. I would have them understand the difference between similes for exposition and similes for ornament, and would wish to produce unequivocal instances of each sort; but with Bacon, as with the Elizabethans generally, perhaps the greater number of similes do not serve either purpose. In the present Essay, in particular, there is not, as I conceive, any very successful example. This is barely passable:—"The enquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it; the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it; and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it—is the sovereign good of human nature". It is well enough to represent the search for truth as "wooing or love-making"; the original meaning of "philosophy" is love of knowledge; but to make different figures for knowledge and belief, which ought to be one, is mere confusion. Still less satisfactory is the higher flight in the next sentence:—"The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of His Spirit". This is either good poetry or nothing. If judged as poetry we have to consider whether the occasion is proper for it, and whether it ought not to have been still more sustained and elaborated. I pass over the next sentence,

which is a questionable following out of the creation idea. Then comes the beautiful adaptation of the well-known passage in Lucretius :—"Suave mari magno"—whose application, however, is self-contradictory. And, finally, the sentence, "Certainly it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth,"—which is little better than high-sounding nonsense.

This shows the use that one Essay may serve in connection with genuine English teaching as I understand it. But such an application would be best made, not by going through the Essays *seriatim*, but by a judicious selection of examples, to be taken with other examples gathered elsewhere. It would not pay to examine the separate Essays thoroughly for this, or for any other quality of style.

To vary the illustration, let me advert to the Essay on "Studies". There are some good examples of sentence structure, and some of a vicious tendency, not confined to the Elizabethans. It is one of Bacon's most antithetical Essays. The sentences are elaborately balanced. Thus:—"Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability". To follow up a triple predication well is not easy; and Bacon is so far successful. The point where he trips is seen in the succeeding sentence, but is more briefly shown in a sentence later on:—"Crafty men contemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them: *for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation*". The portion given in italics is the weak point of the sentence. It is bad form to make a prominent balance, and then destroy it by a dangling addition to one of the members. This Bacon often does, and a warning against the error is never superfluous. When there is a necessity for expanding one member of a balance, the way of doing it can be easily pointed out.

The obverse couple—Beauty and Deformity (43, 44)—should have made one Essay, and it would be a good lesson in

exposition to fuse them. But the handling does not lend itself to such an operation; there is no parallelism in the selection of topics. Thus, the one on Beauty begins:—"Virtue is like a rich stone, best plain set". The other commences:—"Deformed persons are commonly even with nature. For as nature hath done ill by them, so do they by nature". Now the curious thing is that the Essay preceding is "Youth and Age," also an obverse couple, which is handled throughout by the method of contrast. If anything could justify the employment of the Essays as a text-book of instruction in style, it would be to profit by the author's inconsistencies.

The Essay on "Nobility" may be next cited. As a snatch of political philosophy, it has lost all its value. As an exercise in style, it might be turned to some account, but only in an advanced stage of a pupil's progress in the expository art. It begins thus:—"We will speak of nobility, first as a portion of an estate, then as a condition of particular persons". The paragraph introduced by this sentence discusses the uses of nobility in the political system; and, although the thoughts are clearly stated, and the author's meaning intelligible throughout, the paragraph is a jumble, and would not pass for good writing in the present day. The rectification of it would be a useful enough lesson if it could be done upon principle. The second sentence lays down and illustrates, in very bad arrangement, the principle that nobility tempers monarchy, and prevents it from being too absolute; and includes, as an obverse, that it is not needed by democracy. The two succeeding sentences give examples of this obverse from the Swiss and the Low Countries. In the next sentence the original proposition is varied thus:—"A great and potent nobility addeth majesty to a monarch, but diminisheth power". It takes some consideration to make this fit in with the former statement. Then comes a remark as to the proper position of nobles; not too great for

sovereignty, nor for justice. Finally, nobles should not be too numerous. The incoherence of the paragraph is not past remedy; and if pupils could be taught to bring it into good order, they might be profitably employed.

The second paragraph discusses the second head—nobility as a condition of particular persons. In this, too, there are some good thoughts expressed in Bacon's way, including his characteristic maxim—"There is rarely any rising but by a commixture of good and evil arts" (which need not be too early brought under the notice of youth); but the paragraph ends with a sentence that would, in any reconstruction, have to find a place in the first paragraph.

I give this as a favourable case for imparting a lesson in Style from the Essays, while I still believe that the same lesson could be much better given from more modern writers.

To my mind, one of the happiest in the collection is that entitled "Judicature"—the demeanour proper to the judge on the bench. So well does Bacon hit the situation in all its varying aspects that, excepting a more diffuse illustration, I cannot conceive any improvement upon it. His style is at its very best.

Here, then, is a case for teaching by example what is good in style. But the best of all ways of pointing out a merit is to place it side by side with the corresponding demerit. This is still more satisfactory when the same writer furnishes us with both. Take now the following sentence:—"The parts of a judge in hearing are four: to direct the evidence; to moderate length, repetition, or impertinency of speech; to recapitulate, select, and collate the material points of that which hath been said; and to give the rule or sentence". For its purpose this is a perfectly formed sentence. Compare, then, the following:—"A man's nature is best perceived in privateness, for there is no affectation: in passion, for that putteth a man out of his precepts; and in a new case or experiment, for there custom

leaveth him". The defect in this sentence is very apparent after reading the other. As it stands, when we read—"A man's nature is best perceived in privateness," we assume at once that this is the single mode of perceiving a man's nature, and we are taken aback when we come to find that there are other ways. The sentence from Judicature teaches us the remedy:—"A man's nature is best perceived *in three situations*: in privateness," etc. This sentence exemplifies an error that is always recurring; it is not connected either with Bacon's mannerism or with Elizabethan usages. And such are the examples that should be mainly singled out.

We do not decry Bacon when we attempt to define his place in our education. The condensed wisdom and the felicity of his best Essays possess a charm for those that have had some experience of life, but are thrown away upon the young. The free-will reader fastens upon the good and skips the indifferent; the learner working for examinations fastens upon all alike.

CHAPTER V.

INTELLECTUAL QUALITIES OF STYLE.

SELECT LESSONS.

THE previous chapter was mainly negative. Its chief purpose was to prepare the way for making English style a subject of teaching, without involving the subject-matter under discussion in the passages chosen for reference.

A few words of explanation will introduce the lesson now to be given.

Any thorough scheme of teaching English must fall into a course, the complete development of which would demand at least a hundred such lessons as I mean to exemplify. To select three or four of these lessons is necessarily to work at a disadvantage, but may yet serve to convey our idea of the plan to be followed.

The plan itself is the plan of a complete system of Rhetoric, or the higher Composition. This may be variously given ; but it cannot omit the figures of speech, the qualities of style, and the different kinds of composition. It may be more or less complete. Our teaching seldom, so far as I know, corresponds to such an exhaustive view of the subject. But whenever it is systematically given, each topic is explained and exemplified. The whole of the instruction in higher English might be overtaken in such a course, in which case an exemplary lesson would consist in the statement and illustration of some rhetorical point or rule of style—say, the figure of hyperbole, the quality of

simplicity, or the art of expounding by example. This, however, I deem a superfluous lesson ; it would be little better than making an extract from a rhetorical treatise.

There is another kind of lesson, which does not exclude the methodical teaching of Rhetoric, but co-operates with that in the most effectual way. It is the criticism of authors, or passages from authors, with a view to the exhibition of rhetorical merits and defects as they turn up casually. An outline of Rhetoric is almost essential to the efficiency of this kind of lesson ; yet with only an outline it may be successfully carried out. It suffices to raise the questions most proper to be considered in English teaching.

In the following selection, which will comprise both the Intellectual and the Emotional Qualities of Style, there will be some examples suitable to a systematic course of Rhetoric, and others embracing promiscuous criticism of passages from leading authors.

My first group of lessons will deal exclusively with the *Intellectual* Qualities of Style. Here we are on definite ground. We can usually tell when a good result is arrived at, and we may show wherein the goodness consists.

The intellectual qualities are mainly three—Simplicity, Clearness, and Energy or Impressiveness. The two first explain themselves. The third is a little more vague. Energy, in certain aspects, is an emotional quality—a source of pleasurable excitement ; but it is also an intellectual quality in the sense of adding to the mental impression of a statement apart from other influences.

The means of producing these three qualities are fully explained in a course of Rhetoric. They come up under various divisions : the figures of speech, the order of words, the sentence and the paragraph, the intellectual styles—descriptive, narrative, and expository. Their elucidation can be

carried out by well-chosen passages in the course of reading. Two or three select lessons will show the manner of proceeding.

I have often discussed with English teachers the question as to the writers most suitable on the whole for their special work. As regards the moderns, I think the one that has the widest support is Macaulay. It is my own decided opinion that he is available, in a pre-eminent degree, for lessons in good prose composition. His vocabulary is copious and choice; in the structural part of composition he excels. Though he has faults, or, it might be better to say, mannerisms, yet these do not detract from his value, but rather the contrary. One use of the English teacher is to show what is not to be copied even in the best models. The exhibition of weak points in a great writer strengthens the perception of his strong points.

LESSON I.

The cheap volume of Macaulay's *Miscellaneous Essays and Speeches* should be in the hands of every student in the higher composition classes. The master would find endless references for exemplifying his instructions. For narrative, for expository style, for oratory of a very high kind, illustrative material exists in superabundance. I will take for my present lesson an extract, not from the volume of miscellaneous writings, but from the *History of England*. It would be an advantage to the reader to see the passage entire, prior to its being given out sentence by sentence. The space, however, may be saved and the purpose answered, by reading continuously the portions in inverted commas. The subject is the settlement of Kenmare, an Irish town founded by Sir William Petty, in 1670.

“A minute account of what passed in one district at this time has come down to us, and well illustrates the general state of the kingdom.” In itself this is an excellent sentence. It admits, however, of a useful variation of order, which better suits its connection in the paragraph:—“The general state of

the kingdom at this time is well illustrated by a minute account that has come down to us of what passed in one district". The subject of the paragraph is the general state of the kingdom, and although this may be given with advantage, and even with emphasis, at the end of the opening sentence, yet the beginning of the sentence is an appropriate position, and the close is thus reserved for what connects the sentence with the one following.

"The south-western part of Kerry is now well known as "the most beautiful tract in the British Isles." A perfect sentence, and a proper following up of the preceding. The inversion of the order also represents an important sentence type, where the subject of the sentence gains emphasis by being put at the end:—"The most beautiful tract in the British Isles is now well known to be the south-western part of Kerry".

"The mountains, the glens, the capes stretching far into "the Atlantic, the crags on which the eagles build, the rivulets "brawling down rocky passes, the lakes overhung by groves in "which the wild deer find covert, attract every summer crowds "of wanderers sated with the business and pleasures of great "cities." A fine example of Macaulay's manner of description, which consists usually in a striking enumeration of vivid and picturesque-particulars without any attempt to arrange them in their places in the scene. This should be compared with other instances of the art of scenic description, as exemplified in innumerable forms in historians, geographers, writers of romance, and poets. The putting of every object in its place in a plan is more thorough, but not so easy reading. Compare more especially the descriptions in Kinglake's "History of the Crimean War".

"The beauties of that country are indeed too often hidden "in the mist and rain which the west wind brings up from a "[boundless ocean. But on the rare days,] when the sun "shines out in all his glory, the landscape has a freshness and

“a warmth of colouring seldom found in our latitude.” The two sentences are given together, because such is the closeness of the connection, that they ought to be made one. The words in brackets will show where the fusion should take place—“boundless ocean : yet, on the rare days”. There is no one point where Macaulay so frequently calls for remark as in the excessive breaking up of his composition into short sentences. He is in this respect an instructive study ; for he obliges us to inquire into the circumstances determining the proper limits of the sentence. The union of the two sentences just quoted will be no surprise to any one. So also with the three following :—

“The myrtle loves the soil. The arbutus thrives better than even on the sunny shores of Calabria. The turf is of livelier hue than elsewhere: the hills glow with richer purple ; the varnish of the holly and ivy is more glossy ; and berries “of a brighter red peep through foliage of a brighter green.” The series of particulars here mentioned make one continuous group, illustrative of the general remark as to the beauty of the landscape. There is no reason for putting a full-stop after the first and second, while the others are separated by the colon or semicolon. The whole should be in one sentence, with semicolon breaks.

“But during the greater part of the seventeenth century, this paradise was as little known to the civilized world as Spitzbergen or Greenland. If ever it was mentioned, it was mentioned as a horrible desert, a chaos of bogs, thickets, and precipices, where the she-wolf still littered, and where some half-naked savages, who could not speak a word of English, made themselves burrows in the mud, and lived on roots and sour milk.” These two sentences need no comment except to emphasize their excellence of construction. A grammatical analysis would be well adapted for that end. Mark, in the second especially, how well the clauses follow one another, each paving the way for the next.

The next sentence begins a fresh paragraph :—

“At length in the year 1670, the benevolent and enlightened Sir William Petty determined to form an English settlement in this wild district.” For greater emphasis to the main circumstance, we might change the conclusion thus:— “determined to form, in this wild district, *an English settlement*”.

“There he possessed a large domain.” “He possessed (a large domain there) ‘there a large domain,’ which has descended to a posterity worthy of such an ancestor. On the improvement of that domain he expended, it was said, not less than ten thousand pounds.” These two sentences are so close in meaning that they may advantageously be made into one, with merely a semicolon break, and the words “of that domain,” replaced by “of which”. We may experiment a little upon the order of the particulars in the second:— “And he expended, it was said, not less than ten thousand pounds in the improvement of that domain”. It is a nice point whether the place of emphasis (the close) should be given to the fact of improvement or to the extent of it, as shown by the expenditure.

“The little town which he founded, named from the bay of Kenmare, stood at the head of that bay, under a mountain ridge, on the summit of which travellers now stop to gaze upon the loveliest of the three lakes of Killarney.” One of Macaulay’s exquisite sentences; perfect in its own way. Not a word could be displaced, except for the worse. The only exercise possible would be to try some change, and compare the effect with the original. “He founded a little town, and named it Kenmare, from the bay of that name, at whose head it stood; it lay under a mountain ridge,” etc. No improvement, certainly.

“Scarcely any village, built by an enterprising band of New Englanders, far from the dwellings of their countrymen, in the midst of the hunting grounds of the Red Indians, was

“more completely out of the pale of civilization than Kenmare.” Difficult to improve upon this. Perhaps the two last words, “than Kenmare,” could be omitted. The only effect would be to give a somewhat greater prominence to the important phrase, “out of the pale of civilization”. The expression, “far from the dwellings of their countrymen,” is of use to help out the idea of isolation of the supposed village, but there would be a little gain if it were omitted, so as to give full scope to the more energetic circumstance—“in the midst of the hunting grounds of the Red Indians”.

“Between Petty’s settlement and the nearest English habitation, the journey by land was of two days through a wild and dangerous country.” We are not yet familiarized to such separations of substantive and related phrase as we have here. Other ways of meeting the case might be tried. “The journey by land—land journey—occupied two days.” “The journey by land was through a wild and dangerous country, and took two days.”

“Yet the place prospered. Forty-two houses were erected. The population amounted to a hundred and eighty. The land round the town was well cultivated. The cattle were numerous. Two small barks were employed in fishing and trading along the coast.” This is all very intelligible ; but it offers room for a study of the best mode of dividing sentences in a detailed enumeration of particulars. The first short sentence—“Yet the place prospered”—is as it should be ; it is a comprehensive view of what follows, and should stand aloof from the subsequent detail. The case is different with the remaining sentences. The houses and the population might well be taken in one sentence—“Forty-two houses were erected, there being a population of one hundred and eighty”. Or transpose the clauses:—“The population amounted to one hundred and eighty, and forty-two houses were erected”. This would be the best order, if there be any

implication of cause and consequent in the matter. So with the two following:—"The land round the town was well cultivated, and the cattle were numerous". Some importance attaches to the next sentence—the last quoted—relating to the fishing; it is one of a group of three devoted to this single item. I must quote in order the two others to consider the effect of the whole.

"The supply of herrings, pilchards, mackerel, and salmon was plentiful, and would have been still more plentiful, had not the beach been, in the finest part of the year, covered by multitudes of seals, which preyed on the fish of the bay. Yet the seal was not an unwelcome visitor: his fur was valuable; and his oil supplied light through the long nights of winter." The last sentence has a natural connection with the latter half of the preceding, namely, what refers to the seal; while the first half of that sentence might be taken along with the previous one. Thus:—"Two small barks were employed in fishing, as well as in trading, along the coast; the supply of herrings, pilchards, mackerel, and salmon being plentiful. This supply would have been still more plentiful, had not the beach been, in the finest part of the year, covered by multitudes of seals, which preyed on the fish in the bay: nevertheless, the seal was not an unwelcome visitor," etc. It is desirable not to multiply sentences upon one single topic of a series all comprehended in the same paragraph. We cannot well dispose of the fishing in less than two sentences, but we do not need three.

"An attempt was made, with great success, to set up iron works. It was not yet the practice to employ coal for the purpose of smelting; and the manufacturers of Kent and Sussex had much difficulty in procuring timber at a reasonable price. The neighbourhood of Kenmare was then richly wooded; and Petty found it a gainful speculation to send ore thither. The lovers of the picturesque still regret

“the woods of oak and arbutus which were cut down to feed “his furnaces.” Here we have another particular of the industry of Kenmare, occupying four sentences, and admitting of some compression. In any reconstruction, we must be guided by the same principle as before, namely, keeping each sentence to a distinct subject. Mark, however, that the first sentence is so worded as to let us know distinctly that we have entered on a new topic—iron-smelting. What remains is relative to the fact, that the manufacture was based not on the presence of ore in the district, but on the supply of wood for the furnaces, at a time when coal had not been introduced for smelting. The operation of fusing sentences may still be applied ; while the reference to the manufactures of Kent and Sussex, in particular, seems unnecessary, and may therefore be misleading. On first reading the passage, one would suppose that the ore had been procured in those particular countries, and sent to Kenmare for the sake of the plentiful supply of wood ; but this is by no means certain. We might then contract the whole somewhat as follows : “As yet it was not the practice to use coal for smelting ; and timber was costly. The neighbourhood of Kenmare being then richly wooded, Petty found it a gainful speculation to obtain ore and send it thither to be smelted ; and the lovers of the picturesque still regret the woods of oak and arbutus cut down to feed his furnaces.”

“Another scheme had occurred to his active and intelligent “mind. Some of the neighbouring islands abounded with “variegated marble, red and white, purple and green. Petty “well knew at what cost the ancient Romans had decorated “their baths and temples with many-coloured columns hewn “from Laconian and African quarries ; and he seems to have “indulged the hope that the rocks of his wild domain in “Kerry might furnish embellishments to the mansions of Saint “James’s Square, and to the choir of Saint Paul’s Cathedral.” Silent approbation seems the only criticism applicable here.

We could vary the form, but not for the better ; and it is never desirable to vary for the worse. In order to have something to compare with, the following may be given :—"A further project was hit upon. Variegated marbles, some red and white, others purple and green, abounded in the neighbouring islands." The concluding sentence may well be left untouched. We here close an admirably-arranged paragraph.

The next opens an entirely new subject, and is also a model of skilful handling :—

"From the first, the settlers had found that they must be prepared to exercise the right of self-defence to an extent which would have been unnecessary and unjustifiable in a well-governed country." The opening sentence of a paragraph is properly the key to the whole, and is to be appraised accordingly. We must, therefore, glance through the paragraph before pronouncing. Three distinct topics are brought forward in the following order :—The first is the insufficiency of the law for protection in the part of Ireland where Kenmare was situated ; the second is the plundering raid of natives upon the village ; the third the measures taken by the villagers for self-defence. In order to forecast these particulars, the sentence might run thus :—"So defective was the public administration of the country, that the settlers, when exposed to the rapine of the natives, had, from the first, to exercise for themselves the right of self-defence". This variation will not vie with the original in elegance, and is justified only by the motive assigned. Three short sentences follow, all bearing on the first topic, and admitting of consolidation.

"The law was altogether without force in the highlands which lie on the south of the vale of Tralee. No officer of justice willingly ventured into those parts. One pursuivant who in 1680 attempted to execute a warrant there was murdered." In fusing these we can make some experimental changes of order. "In the highlands south of the vale of

Tralee the law was altogether without force ; into these parts no officer of justice willingly ventured ; one pursuivant who in 1680 attempted to execute a warrant there was murdered." It is allowable to include, in one sentence, a principle and its example ; and these three clauses are not too much, nor too widely separated in meaning, to be taken in the same sentence. The topic is thus exhausted, and the next sentence, although related, is a new start.

"The people of Kenmare seem, however, to have been "sufficiently secured by their union, their intelligence, and "their spirit, till the close of the year 1688." This is the introduction to the second branch of the paragraph, which narrates the aggression of the resident Irish. Its structure has to be viewed in connection with what comes next, and seems to be perfect. The sentences following are preparatory explanations, leading up to the main action.

"Then at length the effects of the policy of Tyrconnel "began to be felt in that remote corner of Ireland." Or, by an admissible inversion, we may gain in emphasis :—"Then at length, in that remote corner of Ireland, began to be felt the policy of Tyrconnel".

"In the eyes of the peasantry of Munster the colonists "were aliens and heretics. The buildings, the boats, the "machines, the granaries, the dairies, the furnaces, were doubt- "less contemplated by the native race with that mingled envy "and contempt with which the ignorant naturally regard the "triumphs of knowledge. Nor is it at all improbable that "the emigrants had been guilty of those faults from which "civilized men who settle among uncivilized people are rarely "free. The power derived from superior intelligence had, we "may easily believe, been sometimes displayed with insolence, "and sometimes exerted with injustice." These four sentences are closely related in meaning, but not so closely as to call for consolidation. The two last are most nearly connected, the

second being an explanation of the first : and it is permissible to include a fact and its explanation in one sentence. There are in all three things stated as explanatory of the rising of the Irish. If a little more formality were resorted to, the distinctness of the facts could be better preserved :—“ In the first place [To begin with] in the eyes of the peasantry of Munster, the colonists were aliens and heretics ”. This is an example of that perfection of arrangement for emphasis, which is the motive for so many of the transpositions above suggested. Try another arrangement by way of contrast :—“ The colonists were aliens and heretics, in the eyes of the peasantry of Munster ”. The inferiority of impressiveness will be felt at once. “ In the next place, the buildings, the boats, the machinery,” etc. No change would improve this sentence. “ Lastly, it is but too probable [this is to avoid concurring negatives] that the emigrants had been guilty of the faults rarely absent from civilized men settled among an uncivilized people ; we may easily believe that the power derived from superior intelligence had been sometimes displayed with insolence, and sometimes exerted with injustice.” This completes the particulars of explanation. We next pass to the result.

“ Now, therefore, when the news spread from altar to altar, “ and from cabin to cabin, that the strangers were to be driven “ out, and that their houses and lands were to be given as a “ booty to the children of the soil, a predatory war commenced. “ Plunderers, thirty, forty, seventy in a troop, prowled round “ the town, some with firearms, some with pikes. The barns “ were robbed. The horses were stolen. In one foray a “ hundred and forty cattle were swept away and driven off “ through the ravines of Glengariff. In one night six dwellings “ were broken open and pillaged.” Here, as before, we may consolidate with advantage : any other changes being merely experimental to awaken attention. “ Now, therefore, when the

news spread, . . . there commenced a predatory war." Here we properly close a sentence : the rest might be taken in another sentence ; no further change appears desirable. Then follow the operations of the colonists, which conclude the paragraph, and respond to the final clause of the introductory sentence.

"At last the colonists, driven to extremity (resolved to "die like men, rather than be murdered in their beds) "rather than be murdered in their beds, resolved to die like men". This is the comprehensive sentence, and, although short, must not be added to. The process of consolidating may be carried out with the details.

"The house built by Petty for his agent was the largest in "the place. It stood on a rocky peninsula round which the "waves of the bay broke." Try this variation :—"The largest house in the place was the house built by Petty for his agent ; it stood on a rocky peninsula round which broke the waves of the bay." Not often does Macaulay end a sentence so unmelodiously as "the bay broke".

"Here (the whole population assembled) assembled the "whole population, seventy-five fighting men, with about a "hundred women and children." (They had among them) "Among them they had sixty firelocks, and as many pikes and "swords." These two facts could be in one sentence.

"Round the agent's house they threw up with great speed "a wall of turf fourteen feet in height and twelve in thickness. "The space enclosed was about half an acre." Might be simplified and consolidated. "With utmost speed they threw up a rampart of turf, enclosing half an acre." The repetition of the agent's house appears unnecessary.

"Within this rampart all the arms, the ammunition, and "the provisions of the settlement were collected, and several "huts of thin plank built." Or, "Within this rampart they built several huts of thin plank, and collected all the arms," etc.

“When these preparations were completed, the men of Kenmare began to make vigorous reprisals on their Irish neighbours, seized robbers, recovered stolen property, and continued, during some weeks, to act in all things as an independent commonwealth. The government was carried on by elective officers to whom every member of the society swore fidelity on the Holy Gospels.” These two sentences might be divided at a different point, thus:—“Their preparations completed, they began to make vigorous reprisals on their Irish neighbours, seized robbers and recovered stolen property. For some weeks they acted as an independent commonwealth: the government by elective officers,” etc. The sequence of events might perhaps be more strictly attended to by inverting the order:—“They formed themselves into an independent commonwealth, the government being carried on,” etc.; “and began to make vigorous reprisals,” etc.

The points illustrated in the foregoing examination are of considerable importance in the art of composition. They relate partly to the structure of the sentence, and partly to the sequence of sentences in a good paragraph; all being essential to a lucid style.

LESSON II.

For the present lesson, examples are chosen such as will vary still farther the points brought into prominent illustration. Macaulay is so great a master of sentence structure that he does not sufficiently exhibit the defects that are most usual in beginners. And although we may operate upon a model sentence and endeavour to exhibit its beauties,—yet our most effective lessons are those that first show the imperfect form and then improve upon it.

The following is an extract from a good writer (Samuel

Bailey). The sentences are all fairly passable. Nevertheless, we can find a profitable exercise in considering the ways and means of raising them to our best ideal in each case.

“There are one or two objections which have been brought “against the study of political economy which it may be useful “to notice.” This is perfectly intelligible for its purpose, but we may make useful experiments upon it by way of varying the order. “Against the study of political economy, there have been brought one or two objections; and these it may be useful to notice.” The change has the recommendation of getting rid of two ‘whiches’. It is not merely that ‘which’ is a relative very liable to excess, but that the second of the present two is of doubtful application. Every one must feel that a relative is best employed when it introduces a meaning closely connected with the main clause; and that it is least advantageous when there is a broad transition of subject. Now the stating of objections is one thing, and the point whether it is useful or not to answer them, is another thing: what is termed the co-ordinating relative is employed in such cases of transition: but even this may make the connection too close; and we do still better to resolve the relative into its equivalent “and these,” with a comma or semicolon break, as the case may be. The change of arrangement suggested has a farther advantage in placing closer together the related phrases of the sentence.

“The first is, that it treats of an unworthy object of pursuit, “—confines itself to one, and that not a very ennobling topic—“wealth; in a word, that it is a mean, degrading, sordid inquiry, “and tends to fix men’s affections on what they are already too “prone to survey with exclusive devotion.” This sentence fairly explains itself; but we must be hypercritical in order to find matter for our instruction. I begin by remarking upon the pronoun references. The word “first” has here the effect of a pronoun, and points back to the word “objections”; the pronoun “it” refers to “political economy”. There is always

some risk in picking out, by the help of pronouns solely, two different subjects from the same sentence. There is a still more frequent danger in the employment of the pronoun "it"; perhaps no single point in teaching grammar is more in need of iteration. One of Macaulay's commendable peculiarities is his preferring repetition of a word to ambiguity; and I can imagine him filling in both references thus:—"The first *objection* is, that *the science* treats," etc. Here there is not only no possibility of misapprehension; but, what is equally important, there is no delay in calling to mind, from the previous sentence, the things intended to be brought into view.

The remainder of the sentence is free from all ambiguity, and exemplifies a special type of sentence,—namely, where a meaning is made clearer by variation of wording. In discussing at large the arts of expository style, we should have to introduce certain cautions in the employment of this device; but I prefer to confine the present lesson to humbler applications. I will, therefore, merely give the variations of form that serve to make the emphatic words more prominent, by placing them last in their respective clauses:—"The first objection is, that the science treats of an object of pursuit itself *unworthy*; is confined to one not very ennobling topic—wealth; (in a word) "in other words" that the *enquiry* is mean, degrading, sordid (and tends) 'tending' to fix men's affections where their devotion is already too exclusive." In the point of view of energy, which is what is mainly sought by these variations, we may also remark a slight anti-climax, in following up the strong word "unworthy" by the weaker phrase "not ennobling". The difference in the degrees of energy of epithets and expressions may be soon appreciated by pupils at the stage supposed in these lessons, and is a very suitable topic for engaging their attention.

"This objection appears to me to owe any plausibility

“which it may have to the common use of the term wealth in “its comparative or intensive sense.” Shorten and vary thus:—“The plausibility of the objection is owing to our frequently using the term ‘wealth’ in the meaning of excess or superabundance of this world’s goods”. It is a small change to say “the” for “this objection”; but experience will make every one aware of the uncomfortable liability to repeat the word “this”; and I take the opportunity of hinting that, on many such occasions, the definite article is enough. The other changes made in the sentence are in view of lightening it by the omission of unnecessary qualifications—‘appears to me’—and of bringing allied words closer together; the verb “owe” being unreasonably separated from its connective “to the common use”. The closing phrase is an attempt to make the meaning more expressive than is done by “comparative or intensive sense”.

“It is usual to employ the term as denoting the possession “of an extraordinary measure of the good things of this life.” By a more explicit phrase, such as was suggested at the close of the former sentence, this might be dispensed with. If admitted, it would have been not improperly coupled with the preceding, by a semicolon break:—“The term being usually employed as denoting the possession of the good things of (this) life in an extraordinary measure”. This alteration is made on purpose to leave out ‘it,’ as being referable to wealth, and also to place the emphatic circumstance at the close.

“Substitute for this word the phrase ‘economical condition “of the community,’ and ‘where is the objection’?” There would be no harm in repeating thus:—“Substitute for wealth the economical condition—.”

“Is that a mean or sordid enquiry which examines the “causes of national plenty or national destitution?” This being a perfectly sufficient expression of the author’s meaning, rendered energetic by the form of interrogation, the only

exercise upon it consists in making variations that would be at least equally good. "Is there anything mean or sordid in an enquiry into what causes national plenty or destitution?" "Is the examination of the causes of national plenty a mean or sordid enquiry?"

"And what is it, in fact, that occupies, and must necessarily occupy, the greater part of the time and attention of mankind, which prompts their most strenuous efforts, and a failure in which leads to the most exquisite wretchedness?" A slight verbal alteration is enough here. Begin thus:—"And, in point of fact, what is *that which* occupies—". The parallelism of the successive clauses is improved by the change.

"Is it not, apart from hollow pretence, and in plain homely English, to get a living, to obtain a sufficiency of food, shelter, and clothing, and, in other cases, to maintain themselves and families in the rank which habit has made almost essential to their existence?" The phrase "in other cases" needs a prior phrase to correspond; such as "some cases," "one class of cases". The contrast, however, would not be properly given by "some" and "others"; it is a contrast of the many and the few. We might say:—"Is it not, in the majority of instances [or, with the mass of mankind] to get a living—and, in a few, or in the minority, to maintain themselves—".

"And is a science which examines the general causes that aid or baffle their efforts, which aims at saving them from the evils of ignorant policy, and at opening the freest and most fertile fields for their industry—is such a science to be stigmatised as unworthy in its purpose?" Some very delicate criticism is applicable here. There is a rather incongruous conjunction of two clauses of vague but impressive generality with a third clause of pure matter of fact—"opening fields for industry". This last might have been omitted; or, if brought in, it should have been coupled with some circumstances strictly homogeneous, such as "doing away with needless

restrictions of trade". The sentence might be made use of to exemplify the prevailing uncertainty as to the employment of the relatives "that" and "which"; there being apparently no guide but the offence to the ear from repeating one too often. The "that" in "causes *that* aid or baffle their efforts" is evidently chosen for no other reason than to avoid the cloying effect of three 'whiches' in close succession: "science *that*" instead of "science *which*" would have been equally proper. There is seldom any difficulty in avoiding excess of relatives; the participial construction is only one of several substitutes. "And is a science *that* examines the aids and the obstructions of their efforts, *that* aims at saving them—." In the clause "that aid or baffle," the relative should be repeated—"that aid or that baffle"; the case, however, is better met by the copulative "and" than by the alternative "or". The figure of interrogation here lends energy to the whole passage. It should not, however, be too long sustained. The author's example is very good in this respect; after two or three impressive interrogations, a sentence of the plain affirmatory character possesses emphasis. The sentence following is of this character.

"That, surely, would be a blessed system of knowledge "which should contribute to place human beings above "starvation, and elevate even the lowest of society to "comparative plenty; nay, it would be a blessed science if "it did nothing more than mitigate the hardships which it "could not convert into comfort and happiness." Only minute criticism is applicable here. Even that might be omitted, were it not our purpose to make the most of everything. A nice point would arise if the pupil were asked to parse "elevate"; whether is its parallel word, in the previous clause, "contribute" or "place"? In the first case, fill in "should"; in the second "to". The words, "it would be a blessed science," give emphasis by repetition. If omitted, the

second clause would be abbreviated to some advantage ; “or even which did nothing more than mitigate the hardships that could not be removed, still less converted into comfort and happiness”. I do not give this as an improvement upon the original.

“It must force itself, too, on every mind, that those who “take this apparently high moral ground, although really false “position, can hardly be aware of the close connection between “the economical, the intellectual, and the moral condition of “the community.” Some suggestions may be made on the present sentence. To get rid of the commencing “It” is desirable, seeing that the more obvious reference—namely, to what went before—is not the real reference, which is prospective. The contrast—“apparently high *moral ground*, although really *false position*” is not a very pointed one ; still, such contrasts must often pass. A somewhat hypercritical, but not unimportant, remark applies to the last clause. The point of the remark is, that the economical condition of the community is closely allied with *both* the intellectual *and* the moral condition ; and this is the form that should have been given to the statement of the connection. On looking forward, however, we find that the author puts the chief stress upon the “moral” condition exclusively ; so that he might have worded the clause thus :—“can hardly be aware of the closeness of the connection between the economical condition of the community and its moral condition”.

“Nature herself, says a modern writer, forbids that you “should make a wise and virtuous people out of a starving “one.” A very energetic utterance ; it may be varied but can scarcely be improved. The double personification—“Nature herself,” and “you”—is favourable to the simplicity and directness of the sentence. “A starving people cannot, in the nature of things, be wise and virtuous.” “From the very nature of things, a starving people cannot be wise and virtuous.”

“Men must be happy themselves before they rejoice in the happiness of others ; they must have a certain vigour of mind before they can, in the midst of habitual suffering, resist a presented pleasure ; their own lives, and means of well-being, must be worth something before they can value so as to respect the life and well-being of any other person.” Three well-balanced and emphatically ordered clauses. The only criticism called for is to remark on the order of the clauses, as regards connection in the subject. The first and third contain the same idea repeated in a variety of phrase. The second is a somewhat different idea, and connects itself with the next sentence ; it should therefore have been last. Pupils already versed in the balance or parallel construction of sentences, would find a good example here.

“This or that individual may be an extraordinary individual, and exhibit mental excellence in the midst of wretchedness ; but a wretched and excellent people never yet has been on the face of the earth.” The balance, so well carried out in the previous sentence, may be continued here, by a little adjustment. “An extraordinary individual here and there [this is not given as superior to the original], in the midst of wretchedness, may exhibit mental excellence ; but (nowhere on the face of the earth) never has there yet appeared a whole people at once wretched and excellent.”

“Another objection to the science under review is, that it has been found to contain (a great number of) numerous errors.” The phrase “under review” might be dispensed with, although its employment for explicit reference is a fault on virtue’s side. There is hardly any possibility of mistaking the science intended.

“Now this charge may be admitted without conceding what is meant to be inferred from it, that political economy should on that account be set aside.” Try a variation in the way of brevity and compactness.—“Now, admitting the charge,

we deny the inference, that political economy is to be set aside on that account."

"Where is the science concerned with events, material or mental, that has not had to struggle through errors of the grossest character? Is it chemistry? look to the doctrine of absolute levity. Is it natural philosophy? look to nature's horror of a vacuum." This cannot be improved. The position of every word and phrase in the first sentence is what it should be, to bring related words into the closest proximity, and to lay the emphasis on the proper things. Any variation that could be suggested would be useful only in stimulating the attention to the essentials of the sentence. "What science, whether material or mental, has not had to struggle—."

"No! the human understanding is in every subject fallible, but in every subject capable of surmounting its errors." An admirable model of a brief sentence, such as Macaulay would delight in.

"If we trace the history of any science, we shall find it a record of mistakes and misconceptions, a narrative of misdirected and often fruitless efforts; yet, if amidst all these, the science has made progress, the struggles through which it has passed, far from evincing that the human mind is prone to error rather than to truth, furnish a decisive proof of the contrary, and an illustration of the fact, that in the actual condition of humanity mistakes are the necessary instruments by which truth is brought to light, or at least indispensable conditions of the process." A lucidly arranged sentence, considering its length. When so much has to be included in one sentence, the arts of condensation and balanced construction are called into play. Qualifying clauses and phrases are reduced as much as possible, and put in as few words as possible; and every word should be put in the situation where the reader is accustomed to expect it.

The arrangement in the present case is perfect ; and the only way to simplify it, is to shorten the qualifications. “In tracing the history of any science, we find it a record of mistakes, a narrative of fruitless efforts ; nevertheless [‘yet’ wants emphasis], should the science still have made progress, the struggles it has passed through, far from evincing that the human mind is prone to error, decisively attest the contrary, and illustrate the fact that, as humanity is constituted, mistakes, if not the necessary instruments for arriving at truth, are at least indispensable adjuncts in the process.”

“This is remarkably applicable to the science of political economy. Multifarious in its facts, and requiring great closeness in its deductions, it must necessarily have erred in the past, and must still be imperfect for ages to come ; but in the meantime, it comprehends a large body of truths which cannot be neglected without individual detriment and national suffering.” Otherwise :—“The science of political economy exemplifies all this to a remarkable degree. In its facts multifarious, and in its deductions close, it must necessarily have erred in the past, and must still be imperfect for ages to come.”

Another short extract will conclude this lesson. It is from a remarkably pointed writer, the late Professor Ferrier, of St. Andrews. It shows the management of a double subject, by the arts of antithesis and balance, assisting the effect of well-chosen terms.

“A system of philosophy is bound by two main requisitions,—it ought to be true, and it ought to be reasoned. If a system of philosophy is not true, it will scarcely be convincing ; and if it is not reasoned, a man will be as little satisfied with it as a hungry person would be by having his meat served up to him raw. Philosophy, therefore, in its ideal perfection, is a body of reasoned truth.” The first short sentence is perfect in its kind. The meaning may be given

more shortly, but not with equal emphasis. "A system of philosophy ought to be both true and reasoned." The author's form is far more suited to arouse the attention. The second sentence supplies the proof of the first, and takes both subjects together with perfect simplicity and lucidity. The balance is not fully pointed, because the second clause contains a much longer statement than the first. Yet, although we could not without mutilation condense that clause so that it may conform with "it will scarcely be convincing," we could make it less unconformable than it is:—"if it is not reasoned, it will be as little satisfactory as raw meat to a hungry person".

"Of these obligations, the latter is the more stringent: it "is more proper that philosophy should be reasoned, than that "it should be true; because, while truth may perhaps be un-
"attainable by man, to reason is certainly his province, and
"within his power. In a case where two objects have to be
"overtaken, it is more incumbent on us to compass the one to
"which our faculties are certainly competent, than the other,
"to which they are perhaps inadequate." A new proposition, still exemplifying the terseness of the balanced structure. We may vary, but cannot improve it:—"The second of the two requisitions is more stringent than the first": "because while truth may be perhaps unattainable by the human powers, to reason is within their compass". It is by a licence, often unavoidable, that the pronoun "he," "his," is made to answer to "man" collectively. We may try our hand in modifying the concluding sentence, with a view to keep up the same order of statement as in the preceding, where the unattainable object is placed first of the two. "Where we have to undertake two objects, it is less incumbent on us to deal with that to which our faculties are perhaps inadequate, than with that to which they are certainly competent." It is an undoubted ease to the mind to find an iterated series of things kept in the same order throughout.

“This consideration determines the value of a system of philosophy. A system is of the highest value only when it embraces both these requisitions—that is, when it is both true and reasoned. But a system which is reasoned without being true, is always of higher value than a system which is true without being reasoned.” With slight variations of order, we may re-model these sentences, and compare the effect. “A system of philosophy has its value determined by these considerations.” “By these considerations, a system of philosophy is valued.” “The highest value attaches to a system, only when it is both true and reasoned. Yet a system that is reasoned without being true has always a higher value than one that is true without being reasoned.”

“The latter kind of system is of no value; because philosophy is ‘the attainment of truth *by the way of reason*’. That is its definition. A system, therefore, which reaches the truth, but *not* by the way of reason, is not philosophy at all; and has, therefore, no scientific worth. The best that could be said of it would be, that it was better than a system which was neither true nor reasoned.” “Indeed, a system of the latter kind has no value whatever. The very definition of philosophy is the attainment of truth *by the way of reason*. A system that reaches the truth, but not by the way of reason, is not philosophy at all.”

“Again, an unreasoned philosophy, even though true, carries no guarantee of its truth. It may be true, but it cannot be certain; because all certainty depends on rigorous evidence, on strict demonstrative proof. Therefore no certainty can attach to the conclusions of an unreasoned philosophy.” “Again, an unreasoned philosophy, even though true, has not its truth guaranteed. It cannot be certain; for certainty reposes on demonstrative proof. To the conclusions of an unreasoned philosophy, therefore, there can attach no cer-

tainty." The motives of these changes of order have been repeatedly assigned.

"Further, the truths of science, in so far as science is a means of intellectual culture, are of no importance in themselves, or considered apart from each other. It is only the study and apprehension of their vital and organic connection which is valuable in an educational point of view." "Further, in so far as philosophy [keeping to the same leading term] is a means of culture, its doctrines [better here than 'truths'] are of no importance individually or considered apart from each other: the study and apprehension of their organic connection is alone valuable as education."

"(But) 'Now' an unreasoned body of philosophy, however true (and formal) it may be, has no living and essential inter-dependency of parts on parts [this clause may be put in other forms, needless now to exemplify], and is, therefore, useless as a discipline (of the mind), and valueless for tuition."

As amended:—"Now an unreasoned body of philosophy, however true, has no inter-dependency of parts on parts, and is therefore useless as an intellectual discipline or as a means of instruction."

"On the other hand, a system which is reasoned but not true, has always some value. It creates reason by exercising it. It is employing the proper means to reach truth, although it may fail to reach it." These three sentences may be consolidated. "On the other hand, a system that is reasoned, though it may not be true, has a real value; by exercising, it creates, reason; it may fail to reach truth, but it employs the proper means to that end."

"Even though its parts may not be true, yet if each of them be a step leading to the final catastrophe—a link in an unbroken chain on which the ultimate disclosure hinges—and if each of the parts be introduced merely because it is such a step or link—in that case it is conceived that the

“system is not without its use, as affording an invigorating employment to the reasoning powers, and that general satisfaction to the mind which the successful extrication of a plot, whether in science or in romance, never fails to communicate.” The only objection to this sentence is one that goes somewhat beyond the form of the language, but is yet within the compass of the English teacher. The concluding clause takes us away from the severe view of philosophy as a discipline of the mind in the search after truth, and introduces us without a break, and without warning, to a totally different class of effects, the emotional or poetic effects of discovery. There should be a slight pause in making so great a transition:—“Even though the parts may not be individually accurate, yet if each of them be a step leading to the final result [‘catastrophe’ scarcely in keeping], a link in an unbroken chain whereon hinges the ultimate disclosure, brought in solely as being such a step or link,—in that case, the system has a use, as an invigorating employment of the reasoning powers. It is, moreover, calculated to impart to the mind the gratification experienced in the successful extrication of a plot, an interest belonging alike to science and to romance.”

LESSON III.

This third and last lesson on the Intellectual Qualities of Style will include the examination of two passages, the one descriptive, and the other expository.

The first is from Carlyle. It is his description of the town of Prag. Now, the Rhetorical arts of Description are neither many nor recondite: they can be very precisely stated; they are imperative under pain of total failure in intelligibility. Carlyle is one of the greatest masters of the art; and, as in his narratives, so here,—he presses his mannerisms into the service.

“Weissenberg is on the hither or western side of Prag: the Hradschin, which is the topmost summit of the City and of

“ the Fashionable Quarter,—Old Bohemian Palace, still occasionally habitable as such, and in constant use as a *Downing-Street*,—lies on the slope or shoulder of the Weissenberg, a good way from the top ; and has a web of streets rushing down from it, steepest streets in the world ; till they reach the Bridge, and broad-flowing Moldau (broad as Thames at half-flood, but nothing like so deep) ; after which the streets become level, and spread out in intricate plenty to right and to left, and ahead eastward, across the River, till the Ziscaberg, with frowning precipitous brow, suddenly puts a stop to them in that particular direction.” This long sentence embraces a very elaborate and effective description. The language has all the author’s force and picturesqueness ; its merits are too obvious to need criticism, except in a very elementary stage when the pupil is studying the Figures of Speech. The arrangement is generally good ; but the goodness comes out best in an attempt to vary, if not improve, it. At the very outset, there is brought into prominent consideration a fundamental rule of all composition addressed to the understanding : that is, to start from something already known to the reader ; failing which, to make the starting subject understood as soon as possible. In the description of a town, we must begin with site or situation. This is defined, in the present case, by reference to the sloping height of the Weissenberg. From that height Carlyle follows the mass of details downwards across the river till everything is stopped by the precipitous height on the other side, called Ziscaberg. All this is comprised in the sentence quoted. We shall attempt some changes in the order :—“ On the hither or western side of Prag is the Weissenberg height ; on the slope or shoulder of this, a good way from the top, is the Hradschin, the summit of the City, and the Fashionable Quarter : here is the Old Bohemian Palace, still occasionally habitable as such, and in constant use as a *Downing-Street* : from this quarter there

rushes down a web of streets, the steepest in the world ; reaching the Bridge and broad-flowing Moldau (broad as Thames at half-flood, 'but nothing like so deep) : across the River, the streets become level, and spread out in intricate plenty to right and to left, and ahead eastward, till stopped in that direction by the frowning precipitous brow of Ziscaberg." Here we have already a general and comprehensive view of the situation ; with a graphic filling in of the leading details, by help of Carlyle's peculiar genius for similitudes. The next sentence makes the description still more precise, by assigning dimensions and form.

"From Ziscaberg top to Weissenberg top may be about "five English miles ; from the Hradschin to the foot of the "Ziscaberg, north-west to south-west, will be half that distance, "the greatest length of Prag City. Which is rather rhomboidal "in shape, its longest diagonal this that we mention. The "shorter diagonal, from northmost base of Ziscaberg to south- "most of Hradschin, is perhaps a couple of miles." There is some caprice in making one enormous sentence include the previous description, while a much smaller amount of closely related particulars is spread out into three. It is one of Carlyle's mannerisms in grammar to begin a sentence with the relative : were there only a semicolon or colon break between the first and second sentences, there would be nothing singular in the construction. The statement of the particulars of size and form is as lucid as language could make it ; being based on the information already given, and adding what is necessary to complete the view of the town. Criticism is exhausted by the suggestion to make one sentence of the three.

"Prag stands nestled in the lap of mountains ; and is not in "itself a strong place of war : but the country round it, Moldau "ploughing his rugged chasm of a passage through the piled "table-land, is difficult to manœuvre in." The attempt to vary the minutiae of this sentence will only show how well it

bears examination. "Prag itself stands nestled in the lap of mountains, and is not a strong place in war: yet the country round it is difficult to manœuvre in; Moldau ploughing his rugged chasm of a passage through the piled table-land." There is no intrinsic objection to making the last clause parenthetical as Carlyle does. He makes great use of parentheses, in getting successfully over the difficulties of complex delineations. Here, however, there is no need for thrusting this clause into the heart of another; it can be appended as a clause of explanation without derogating from the lucidity of the whole: the more so, that it closes the paragraph. The next is an independent start with a view to picture the entire valley of the Moldau.

"Moldau valley comes straight from the south, crosses Prag; and,—making on its outgate at the northern end of Prag (end of 'shortest diagonal' just spoken of), one big loop, or bend and counter-bend, of horse-shoe shape, which will be notable to us anon,—again proceeds straight northward and Elbeward." The order of statement here is perfect. It seems as if we ourselves could not have written it otherwise; a pleasant delusion that we often fall under in perusing the style of a master. Make this trial as a test: break it up and present it out of joint, to see whether the pupils would at once restore the original.

"It is narrow everywhere, especially when once got fairly north of Prag; and runs along like a Quasi-Highland Strath, amid rocks and Hills. Big Hill-ranges, not to be called barren, yet with rock enough on each hand, and fine side valleys opening and here there: the bottom of your Strath, which is green and fertile, with pleasant busy villages (much intent on water-power and cotton spinning in our time), is generally of few furlongs in breadth." Here we may try our hand at making variations, although not necessarily improvements. "It runs along, like a Quasi-Highland Strath amid

rocks and Hills ; big Hill ranges, not to be called barren, yet with rock enough on each hand, and fine side valleys opening here and there. Everywhere it is narrow, especially when once got fairly north of Prag ; the bottom of your Strath is generally of few furlongs in depth, and is green and fertile, with pleasant busy villages now containing cotton-mills driven by water." The change of order is intended to bring related points somewhat closer. The alteration at the close is a useful exercise upon Carlyle's mannerism, to see whether the same thing can be expressed in the more ordinary style with equal terseness and lucidity.

"And so it lasts, this pleasant Moldau-Valley, mile after mile, on the northern or Lower Moldau, generally straight north, though with one big bend eastward just before ending ; and not till near Melnick, or the mouth of Moldau, do we emerge on that grand Elbe Valley,—glanced at once already, from Pascopol or other Height, in the Lobositz times." The author here indulges in some of his favourite word-play, to a length not called for by the bare necessities of the description. The sentence before the last quotation had landed us in the northern course of the valley, after the horse-shoe bend, and indicated the course to the Elbe. We now take this up, and add, that, while the course is generally northward, there is one bend eastward before entering the valley of the Elbe, near Melnick. The author, in writing the intervening sentences relative to the character of the valley, had apparently let drop from his mind the precise form of the opening sentence, and accordingly does not make the present tally with that, but, to make sure, indulges in some needless repetition. If the paragraph were to be recast, we could include with the first sentence the gist of the last, namely the connection with the valley of the Elbe, which could have been given, in a very few additional words, and would have made the picture of the lie of the valley more coherent and more easy to conceive. We

could also invert the order of statement of the relationship of the two valleys ; beginning at the Elbe, and treating the Moldau as a branch. We should thus bring the direction of the valley into close union with its formation and size, without leaving any point connected with the direction to be taken up again. The general principle in describing a branch is to commence at the point where it leaves the stem.

My final extract will be a very testing lesson. It proceeds in the line of the concluding remark upon the Carlyle passage, namely, the desirability of bringing together all closely related statements. The difficulties attending the operation are often very great, indeed, insuperable ; there being conflicting claims to adjudge. Still the principle is of paramount obligation with a view to clearness and impressiveness in description, narration and exposition. It involves a mental discipline that may be of all degrees of stringency ; from simple devices within the compass of a beginner in the art of composition, to ingenuities of construction that might tax the power of a wrangler in an English Tripos. The extract now chosen is of more than average difficulty ; and, in actual teaching, would follow, at a considerable interval, the discussion of such extracts as those already given.

The passage in question might be subjected to the same kind of examination as those in the two previous lessons, for the internal arrangement of sentences and the bearing of each upon those immediately preceding or following. All this will be forborne, in the present instance, with a view to a larger purpose,—namely, the arrangement of an entire paragraph, on the principle of maximum closeness of related topics. Instead of doling out the passage by sentences, I quote it entire, before commencing operations.

“(1) The abolition of monarchy and the introduction of

“ plural or republican government, which had its origin in
“ Greece, was both a proof of the high intelligence of the
“ Greeks, and a powerful auxiliary in the subsequent advance-
“ ment of their civilization. (2) It was at first an effect, and
“ afterwards became a conspiring cause, of their superiority to
“ the Asiatic nations, to the nations which they designated as
“ *barbarian*. (3) The Greeks were the inventors of corporate
“ government, of the system of dividing the sovereign power
“ among a number of co-ordinate persons, whose combined
“ assent was necessary to an act of the supreme authority.
“ (4) For this assent of the sovereign body unanimity was not
“ requisite: it could be given by the majority. (5) This
“ system was invented by the Greeks, as much as the pendu-
“ lum clock was invented by Huyghens, or the steam-engine
“ by Watt. (6) When it was introduced by them, the world had
“ known nothing but monarchy. (7) It is the essence of a free
“ government: without the distribution of a sovereign power
“ among a body, free government cannot exist. (8) This im-
“ portant principle in the art of government the Greeks con-
“ ceived clearly, and after a time they applied it universally in
“ their small city communities. (9) The office of the ancient
“ hereditary king was either abolished, or converted into a
“ sacerdotal dignity; any individual who, by cajoling or in-
“ timidating the people, was able to make himself a *tyrant*, or
“ despot, was regarded as an usurper, and his rule rested on
“ force. (10) The Greeks detested the usurped and illegiti-
“ mate government of one man, but their application of the
“ principle of corporate government was unskilful. (11) They
“ either divided the entire sovereignty among a few men,
“ determined by birth or wealth, or they divided it among the
“ entire free body of citizens. (12) The former government
“ was called an oligarchy or aristocracy, the latter a democracy.
“ (13) There was no contrivance for delegating the sovereign
“ power, as in the modern system of Political Representation.

“(14) In an oligarchy, the oligarchs were independent of popular election ; in a democracy, the entire people exercised their sovereign rights directly, and without appointing any representatives to act for them. (15) This unskilful application of an invaluable principle produced two ill results in the republics of antiquity, one with respect to their internal, the other with respect to their external relations. (16) As to their internal relations, the ruling body in an oligarchy was too independent of the people, while the ruling body in a democracy was too numerous for intelligent government, and was liable to be stimulated to passionate decisions by eloquent demagogues. (17) As to their external relations, they were unable to incorporate conquered territory into their own system of government, upon fair and equal terms. (18) A newly acquired province became a dependency, under the ruling body of citizens in the sovereign state. (19) Nevertheless, with all their defects, the free governments of Greece and Italy produced all that was precious in antiquity—their literature, their art, their science, their history. (20) It was through them that the foundations of our modern [European] civilisation were laid. (21) They were a necessary condition for the existence of a state of society and education which could not grow up under the Oriental system of monarchy ; the most improved method of government which the Greeks found in being.”

I do not give this as a bad or unintelligible piece of composition. The author's drift is tolerably plain, and he might well be satisfied with it as it stands. Still, the arrangement is vicious, and would be fatal if the subject were intrinsically more abstruse. There are three or four leading ideas in the paragraph, and these, instead of being each begun and ended in one continuous exposition, are mixed up together, now a sentence to one, and now a sentence to the other. Observe,

for example, how the one idea—that the invention of corporate government was due to the Greeks—is made to crop out in detached utterances. It is given by implication in sentence (1); it is the substance of (3) and (5), the statement being interrupted by another subject in (4); it is hinted at again in (8). The other topics are necessarily disjointed by this treatment. Along with the general fact now stated, there are two auxiliary or modifying statements, also given in the scattered fashion; these are,—the Greeks detested monarchy, and they were unskilful in their carrying out of the democratic system.

The other main ideas are,—the definition or essential principles of democracy, the varieties and forms set up in Greece, and the workings of these forms for good and for evil.

There might be various modes of combing the paragraph straight. It would be a relief to omit all the *iterations* of the first-named idea,—that is, that the Greeks were the sole inventors of corporate government. This, however, is evading the difficulty, and is not instructive as a lesson. Again, it is desirable, as a rule, to supply as early as possible the complete definition of the subject in hand. Now the explanation of what corporate government essentially consists in, is sporadically spread—in sentence (1), where it is named “plural” government, and opposed to monarchy, in (3), and in (4), (7), (11), (12).

The merits and mistakes, the feelings and motives of the Greeks, are so intertwined with the exposition, that they cannot be easily separated and put away in a corner by themselves; the more so, that the author is bent on giving us the interest of personality along with his account of the contrasting forms of government. We must, therefore, be content with a compromise, after showing clearly what we consider objectionable, and what we should wish to have done. Considering that what is stated and iterated in sentences (1) and (2)—namely, that democracy was both cause and effect of Grecian

superiority—is repeated at the close of the paragraph, and is suitably placed there, we have only to consider how to dispose of the first clause of (3), “the Greeks were the inventors,” and (5), which contains this idea and nothing else; we shall then have a nearly continuous exposition of the nature, the virtues, and the divisions of corporate government, as realised in Greece. Let us simply be content, in the first instance, with one intimation of the fact of the invention, and we may start the paragraph thus :—

“ Before the Greeks, the world knew of no other Government besides monarchy; to them exclusively was owing the introduction of plural or republican government; the system of dividing the sovereign power among a number of co-ordinate persons, whose combined assent, as given by the majority, was necessary to an act of the supreme authority. This is the essence of free government; without the distribution of the sovereign power among a body, free government cannot exist.” So far we have provided for the exposition of the main subject, and have found room for one emphatic assertion of the originality of the Greeks. We have now a little pause or break; our next business being to point out in what forms the Greeks set up the plural government. In so doing, we may perhaps find room for iterating their merits, as the author is so anxious to do. In a preliminary statement, and once for all, this may be done again without a breach in the continuity of the exposition. “ Detesting the usurped and illegitimate government of one man, and clearly conceiving the benefits of the corporate system, the Greeks, after a time, applied it universally in their small city communities. The office of the hereditary king was either abolished, or converted into a sacerdotal dignity; and any individual, who, by cajoling or intimidating the people, was able to make himself a *tyrant*, or despot, was regarded as an usurper and his rule rested on force.” This is so far continuous, but only preparatory. The next point is to

state the positive or constructive side of the case ; which also the author accompanies with an expression relative to the merits of the Greeks. We shall make room for this on the same principle as before, and not allow it as an interruption. "There was, however, a want of skill in the carrying of the corporate principle into practice. Either the entire sovereignty was divided among a few men, determined by birth or wealth, or else it was exercised by the whole body of the free citizens ; there being nothing corresponding to our modern system of Political Representation. The first of the two modes was called an oligarchy or aristocracy, the second a democracy. Their defects were these :—In an oligarchy, the oligarchs were independent of popular election ; in a democracy, the entire people exercised their sovereign rights directly ; for both these defects, representation would have been the remedy." We have now disposed of the corporate institutions, in their two forms, and, by a reference to the modern representative system, have shown at once the defects and the remedy. What follows, (15) to (18), is remarkably clear and consecutive, notwithstanding the difficulties of a double subject with double predicates. These four sentences are so well managed, that they may be left untouched. The concluding sentences indicate the great historical consequences of the Grecian system. To this conclusion we proposed to relegate the first sentence in the paragraph, if not superseded by what is there given. We may, however, for the purposes of the lesson, accept these sentences as we find them. They do not violate the principle that we have been endeavouring to enforce. They interrupt nothing, and they keep to a point, without digression or irrelevance ; a commendation not applicable to the first half of the paragraph.

CHAPTER VI.

EMOTIONAL QUALITIES OF STYLE.

SELECT LESSONS.

THE Emotional Qualities of Style, without being peculiar to Poetry, find their most sustained and perfect embodiment in poetical composition. By their very nature, they are vague and indefinite ; while the intellectual qualities are exact and scientific.

It is, therefore, in the criticism of Poetry, that these qualities are brought fully under our notice. They are also set forth, in some methodical fashion, under every system of Rhetoric. Instruction in them, in order to be effective, needs to combine both methods of approach.

Our greatest poets are, of course, our chief resort in the study of the poetic qualities. At the present moment, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, are in most request with English teachers. But devotion to any one man, even the greatest, may be overdone ; and this, I think, is more particularly the case with Shakespeare.

We now possess, for use in schools, numerous annotated editions of the chief Shakespearian plays ; and every week is adding to the collection. I wish to enquire, how far the usual form of the annotations contributes to the education of the pupils in the Qualities of Style.

One constant effort with the editors is to explain all obscure, archaic, or far-fetched words, with a view to the better

understanding of the text. This of course is valuable, but it is not properly an education in English. It indirectly adds to the influence exerted upon the pupil by the reading of Shakespeare, but does nothing to analyze or explain that influence. It is not even criticism, or an aid to criticism. It has no immediate rhetorical bearing whatever.

Another interesting stroke of editorship is to trace the sources of each play in our previous literature. This is curious in itself, and also illustrative of the transforming genius of Shakespeare; yet it does but little to penetrate the secrets of his style.

More important still is the attempt occasionally made to treat each play as a work of literary art; to show how the action proceeds by well-considered steps to the final *denouement*. This undoubtedly is poetical criticism: it does not exactly refer to Poetic Qualities in the acceptance of the individual effects of the noted passages; nevertheless, it is a part, and a vital part, of the art of Poetry. The thing wanting, however, is to couple with the criticism, or to connect with it in the course of the teaching, some general view of the structure of the Drama—of its essentials, and its merits. The account of each play would exemplify this general view, and would be illustrated and impressed by it. To a pupil that has no conception whatever of the plan of a Drama, the criticism of an individual example is without effect.

It is in the attempt to set forth the dramatic merits of each play, that dissertations are frequently introduced in regard to the characters of the leading *dramatis personae*, and the consistency or propriety observed in assigning their parts and supplying their language. As there is a tendency to find Shakespeare perfect in nearly everything, great commendations are bestowed upon the keeping, as well as the language, of the characters.

Now the explanation of a character may be so superficial

that any one can understand it. Lady Macbeth is led away by her own and her husband's ambition, and does a horrible deed. She is not, however, an utterly depraved wretch ; and, when she has time to reflect, her conscience stings her, and she dies a victim to remorse. This is tolerably intelligible to the meanest capacity, and stands on the face of the play. But critics have striven to give much deeper renderings, which are not so self-explaining, and are not fit for elementary teaching. So with Hamlet : there is a superficial, and also a deeper aspect ; but there is as yet no general agreement as to his real character.

After considering the propriety of the individual characters, there is a further question as to the dramatic suitability of each. It has to be seen whether a good drama is produced by their mutual action ; whether the selection of phases is artistic, and not mere chance work. An artist must subdue the horrors of a tragic story, so that it shall be pleasing on the whole. Shakespeare does not always succeed in this, and the points where he fails come within the scope of critical explanation.

A pupil cannot be made to comprehend a play as a work of Art, unless by a comparison of several, united with that general scheme of dramatic composition already adverted to. The notes that may be attached to a solitary play of Shakespeare, to which a class may have devoted so much time as to exclude the comparison with the plays of other dramatists, will certainly make no impression whatever. Indeed, the theory of dramatic art cannot be given in teaching, unless by a regular course of Poetry, combining theoretical views with select references over the general field of poetical literature.

One great drawback in the current mode of annotating Shakespeare for school teaching is, that nearly everything is memory work. The meanings of the archaic and obscure terms have to be taken up by memory as a matter of course. The sources of the plays, if insisted on in examinations, have

to be got by rote. The attempt to set out the proprieties of the drama, and the keeping of the characters, not being conducted according to principles, is also so much memory. There is hardly anything contrived expressly to call the pupil's judgment into exercise.

The Examination papers founded on the Shakespearian plays show memory at its maximum, judgment at its minimum. The teacher is made painfully aware, that his work consists in nearly unmitigated and uninteresting cram. To make a study of a modern writer is to increase the pupil's stock of modern ideas and modern diction. This cannot be said of Shakespeare. We cannot often appropriate his diction; while, as to the winged words that he has cast abroad over literature, we become masters of them without going to the original; and a large part of his composition is unsuitable to present wants. A knowledge of his grammar can only gratify learned curiosity.

One valuable exercise that might bear some fruit, would be to point out his occasional singularity in the use of words, and to give the precise equivalents in good modern prose. It is a peculiarity of his genius to deviate from the current phrases, sometimes in order to his master-strokes of strength and brevity, at other times, from mere indifference to the choice of his terms, provided they come near the thing. "Sir Hugh, *persuade* me not," would be, in modern usage, and in the usage of a carefully correct writer of Shakespeare's own time, for example, Massinger, "*Advise, or counsel* me not": "fate and *metaphysical* aid," would be *supernatural* aid,—as in another passage, we have "supernatural soliciting". The word "metaphysical" never had the meaning here intended. "The quality of mercy is not *strained*": modern equivalent, "it is the quality, or the essence, of mercy not to be under constraint". "The play—was *caviare* to the general"—the generality, the multitude. "My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical," might be paraphrased [and this is a legitimate paraphrase], "my thought, in

which (while) murder is yet but a fantasy—or an imagination". "Most of us would be (cowards) too, but for *inflammation*." Certainly not the proper use of the word ; but it suggests the meaning, and a single word exactly appropriate would not be easy to find.

The following are additional examples :—

It is easy to see how the word "answer" should tend towards the meaning "retaliation," and yet "retaliation" and "answer" are quite different words. The two are confounded in the sentence—"great the slaughter here made by the Romans ; great the answer [retaliation] the Britons must take". "Thus far into the *bowels* of the land have we marched on without impediment." "Bowels of the land" means strictly the underlying rocks and geological formations of the earth : "interior" is the word here. Instead of "how silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night, like softest music to *attending* ears," we should say *listening* or *attentive* ears. "Thy heart is big, get thee apart and weep. Passion, I see, is catching." Here "passion" is, obviously, used for *emotion*, and "catching" for *infecting*. If "faith" is "the eye of the soul," then it is the function of faith to look before or see into the future ; "belief" is an intellectual operation and is simply assent. Hence *prospect* is the wrong word applied to "belief" in the following : "and to be king stands not within the prospect of belief, no more than to be Cawdor". In Shakespeare, "several" (like "particular") is frequently used for *separate* or *different*. Thus :—"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues, and every tongue brings in a several tale, and every tale condemns me for a villain". "All studies here I solemnly *defy*, save how to gall and pinch this Bolingbroke" : "defy" stands for *renounce*. Translated into modern form, "upon his place, and with full line of his authority, governs Lord Angelo," would run—"in his room, and armed with his full authority, governs Lord Angelo". In the single sentence, "Even so the

general, subject to a well-wish'd king, quit their own part, and in obsequious fondness crowd to his presence, where their untaught love must needs appear offence," no fewer than *four* words demand attention, *viz.*: "the general" for the *generality*, "well-wished" for *beloved*, "quit their own part" for *forsake their occupations*, and "untaught" for *unsophisticated*.

We can the more easily afford to mark those departures, because, in so many instances, the perfect word is used with matchless felicity. In whatever terms we choose to set forth the peculiar genius of Shakespeare, his opulence of language must be made to appear as rendering him, with ease, the first man in English, or in any other, literature.

The foregoing suggestion, after all, but adds to the memory work, although it is a more useful storing of memory than the interpretation of archaic phrases. The great desideratum still is, to find scope for the judgment in the perusal of the plays. The only mode in present use, so far as I know, is to ply the ordinary grammatical analysis and parsing. But before taking up Shakespeare, the pupil should have had nearly enough of that. No doubt, it is still useful to select occasional sentences for grammar and parsing, when anything occurs of a novel interest. But no mere grammar parsing gives any idea of the eminent qualities of Shakespeare's style. We must rise above grammar to rhetorical analysis, for which he supplies an endless stock of exercises. Both the intellectual and the emotional qualities of style are seen at their highest pitch; but it is only through Rhetoric, that we can make lessons out of these. Moreover, to be of the smallest use, we must dare to show his faults as well as his merits, the weaknesses that go along with his unparalleled greatness. We have on record Ben Jonson's wish that he had blotted many a line. Dryden says:—"He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast". And Matthew Arnold does not scruple to single out as an example of want of art, a line

that he pronounces "detestable". Now the pupil might well be exercised in testing such statements as these ; that, at least, would be something more than a memory cram.

I shall now give a few examples of the kind of criticism that would, I think, call into play the judgment of pupils, and at the same time instruct them in style. I have in view the Emotional Qualities, but yet cannot help making a reference to the others. In particular, there is one quality, partly intellectual, partly emotional, exemplified by Shakespeare in its very highest degrees : I mean Impressiveness, or the art of stamping a thought on the mind, so that it cannot be easily forgotten. This may serve a purely intellectual function, and no more ; or it may occur along with emotional effects properly so called. The difference will appear as we proceed ; the general fact being that, in an Emotional Quality of the typical sort, there should be the charm of some of the higher and more special emotions, as sublimity, pathos, humour.

As a short and characteristic example of Shakespeare, take these lines :—

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted?
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just ;
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

The second of these lines is part and parcel of the English language. The condensed vigour of the phrases, fitted into a stroke of exquisite metre, is apparent to the dullest apprehension. The comparison with the other lines is highly instructive. The first line would be counted energetic, but for the immensely superior force of the second. The third and fourth lines are unnecessary, and degenerate into mere verbosity. Shakespeare frequently indulges in contrast, which is one of the most effective of our rhetorical devices. We must judge, however, when it is necessary, and when it is not. If the statement from one side is both lucid and emphatic, as

here, the addition of the contrast may be useless, and therefore a cause of weakness, unless it is an independent stroke of genius. Now, while the third line is energetically sustained—

And he but naked, though locked up in steel,

the fourth is flat and verbose—

Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

If the intended contrast could have been summed up in one pointed line, it would have helped, or, at least, not detracted from, the powerful line. In any case, "just" would have been most properly balanced with "unjust" or "injustice". Discarding the first line altogether, we can suppose the second supported by the other two, in some such way as this :—

Thrice armed is he that hath his quarrel just :
And naked he, though clad in steel,
Whose cause is tainted with injustice.

The change, however, only reveals the superfluity of any form of repetition of what is so effectively given in the condensed line.

The quality thus exemplified is, first of all, the intellectual impressiveness above spoken of; and, next, the Emotional quality of the moral sublime,—the grandeur of the noble quality of Justice. The effect is brought out by the apt metaphor, and by that art of condensation and metrical felicity, which gives the general impressiveness.

The use of Contrast is one of the very best lessons that could be given to a young pupil. The present instance may be quoted as a case where it is unnecessary and weakening. On the other hand, the passage on Peace and War,

In peace there's nothing so becomes a man *—

* In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As mild behaviour and humanity ;
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Let us be tigers in our fierce deportment,

needs both members to be stated explicitly. We do not, from what is said of peace, infer at once what is the character suitable for war.

In the famous passage—

There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood leads on to fortune ;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in misery—

we feel that the contrast in the last two lines could be dispensed with.

See also the passage in Henry IV., Part I., on kingly reserve. There is first a lengthened expression of over-familiarity, and a still longer account of the benefits of reserve. Both sides are proper to be fully given ; yet the statements are perhaps too protracted, the criterion being the needless repetition. There should be a mutual tallying of the parts in a lengthened contrast. This is a passage that might be paraphrased with a view to leaving out superfluities, and bringing the opposing members into an illustrative balance.

There is a fine study of the Figures of Exclamation and Climax, in the grand passage :—“What a piece of work is man ! How noble in reason ! how infinite in faculties ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action, how like an angel ! in apprehension, how like a god !”

As a general rule the Exclamation dispenses with a verb. We might say—“Man ! what a piece of work !” The two subsequent exclamations could be inverted, thus :—“In reason, how noble ; in faculties, infinite” ; which brings them into harmony with the remaining expressions, but loses somewhat in force.

When we have elevated passages like this to deal with, there is fine scope for discrimination in studying the progress to a Climax. The present example stands the scrutiny better than many others in Shakespeare. It is, however, only by the intro-

duction of the two lofty comparisons—first, to an angel, and next to a god—that the march of the climax is assured. The other circumstances do not show a progress in strength, as regards the points selected—reason, faculties, form and moving; it is in the adjectives employed, that we are to look for the upward gradation—noble, infinite, express, and admirable. Of these, the second is the most powerful as regards meaning, but the third—“express and admirable”—is more high-sounding, and should not be displaced. The pupil, however, should be made to try various arrangements, in order to practise his judgment on the relative force of different expressions.

The great passage in Macbeth *—

Though you untie the winds—

is unsurpassed for imagery of destruction; but, while the concluding circumstance is perfect for the climax, the sequence of the others is not in the strict gradation of strength. The difference of energy in the particulars chosen could be appreciated by the intelligent pupil, and it would be seen which is the best order for the climax. The third particular—

Though bladed corn be lodged, and trees blown down—

is obviously the weakest circumstance of the series; while the first and second—untying the winds to fight against the churches, and swallowing navigation up—possess a degree of

* Though you untie the winds, and let them fight
Against the churches; though the yesty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up;
Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down;
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure
Of nature's germins tumble all together,
E'en till destruction sicken: answer me
To what I ask you.

energy next to the closing burst, than which nothing could be stronger that the imagination of man could devise.

These are a few examples from the boundless profusion of Shakespeare's art, to show what use we may make of him for exercising our judgment of style. In subsequent illustrations of the Emotional Qualities, I may draw again upon his exuberant wealth. My present contention is that without some application of general views, either of the minutiae of Style, or of the characters of Shakespeare's genius and art, as a whole, we cannot make a sufficient use of his plays to justify the time spent upon them in school lessons. It cannot answer to make so much of the pupils' memory, and so little of their understanding, as we are led to do by following the guidance of our present editors.

Another consideration that should influence our mode of bringing forward Shakespeare in schools, is, that large portions of the best plays afford exceedingly little scope for remark, even under the completest method of handling. The grandest passages are often unsuitable for analysis; either they do not lend themselves to a specific lesson, or they involve too many questions at once. I could not recommend, for exhaustive examination, the great soliloquy—"To be or not to be". If we were to enter upon the discussion of the Figures, Qualities, and Thoughts, of such a passage, we should not know when to have done. It is a passage to be engraved on our memory, by virtue of its own fascination, and not as a school task. We should then recur to it, among our stored-up recollections, and simmer over its language and ideas, when in the suitable mood.

Then again, there are considerable portions of each of the plays where there is nothing specially great, and for that reason no suitable matter for commentary. Yet reading, for the sake of reading, without anything to remark upon, without

questions to ask, is dull work, even although the composition is Shakespeare's. We might, by main force, extract lessons from almost anything; but good teaching implies that we should operate upon the most apposite examples, wherever they may be found.

Proportion will ever be the highest law of education. This omitted, the very finest materials may turn to waste. The present tendencies in English teaching seem to violate the principle. Too much of the pupils' time is given to the older writers; too much to poetry; too much to Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, in particular. No doubt, if the English language is to be treated as learned lore, and not as an instrument of every-day life, its ancient history, its derivation, and its stages of growth, are all worthy of being studied. Yet our practical needs are not to be lightly slurred over; they should be seen to in the first instance, and not be postponed to any course of mere learned luxury.

I have already brought to view the quality of Impressiveness, as having both an intellectual and an emotional bearing. The less ambiguously Emotional qualities must now be exemplified.

It will be an enduring difficulty in English teaching to bring forward, in a methodical plan, the Emotional Qualities of Style, as exemplified to the fullest degree in poetry. To initiate pupils into discriminating effects of feeling is not impossible, but it involves considerations altogether new. We cannot evade the problem; if we enter upon poetical criticism in any shape, we assume to ourselves the power of solving it well or ill. The critical estimate of a poem is the summing up of the impressions made upon us by its succession of passages, and each passage should have an assignable effect on assignable grounds. Now we ought, if possible, to lift the pupil by gradual steps from the alphabet of criticism to the

highest embodiment of it in the phraseology of our greatest critics. How is this to be done? How far is it already done?

In the first place, the consideration of the Figures of Speech leads us a certain way, and might lead us further. Of these figures, while a small number aid in promoting the intellectual qualities, the greater number bear upon emotional qualities, and owe their merit to that circumstance. So that, when the teacher, after asking what is the special figure in a given expression, asks what is its use or effect, he asks the pupil to take note of an emotional quality. You quote—

“ Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,”

and are told at once that there are two similes. The next question is, what are their effects? This needs an effort to appreciate and discriminate the emotional associations of the words. Some account needs to be given of the “ furies ”; the emotion that they inspire must be stated by its proper name; even its intensity must be assigned, in order to show its bearing upon the object of comparison. Something like this must be said of it :—A “ fury ” is a being of a malignant and revengeful nature, and so great is the malignity that it inspires extreme dread and terror. It is still further intensified by the “ ten ”. Yet more powerful is the other comparison to “ hell,” which is the most intense object of dread known to human beings, and, consequently, produces the strongest effect of any, when used as a comparison; the only drawback being that it is too much hackneyed for the purpose.

It is obvious, without further instances, that the examination of Figures compels the pupil to exhibit an acquaintance with the emotional associations of terms; and this implies a knowledge of the leading emotions, and a power of naming them. The epithets of criticism are emotional names. The terms—strong, grand, sublime, beautiful, graceful, pathetic, humorous—are the names partly of feelings and partly of the

objects that call forth the feelings, and have their value from that cause.

In the following exegesis, I take for granted the knowledge of some scheme of the leading Figures of Speech, which are the classical device for first introducing pupils to the characteristics of Composition, but which are without meaning unless they are pushed to the point of indicating Qualities. Still, in order that this indication may be intelligible and productive, it must be conjoined with the methodical scheme of qualities themselves. In fact, Figures and Qualities, although laid out apart, are not two separate classes of things, but the same class of things brought forward from different points of view. Figures are nothing without reference to the effects or Qualities; and Qualities would not be easy to grasp, express, and define, without some such assistance as has been rendered through the invention, by the ancient rhetoricians, of the distinctions of Figure. When expurgated, by dropping out repetitions and trivialities, these figures are, I think, still the best way of approaching the rhetorical qualities of style, but they would not of themselves suffice for a course of instruction in those qualities: they must be blended in a kind of solidarity with a distinct scheme of the qualities themselves.

The scheme of the Qualities would include strength, pathos, humour, wit, harmony, beauty, in certain gradations or varieties; and some specific definition would have to be attached to each mode, with suitable examples. Even this, however, in addition to the Figures, would not be a wide enough basis for poetical criticism, or the exegesis of poetical passages; there would be still wanted a view of the Poetic Art, as a whole, in which would be enumerated such elements as concreteness, ideality, harmony, personification, imitation, redemption of pain, and so on. Then, also, the leading species of poetry would have to be indicated—epic, dramatic, lyric; these, also, supplying terms in the vocabulary of criti-

cism. There is still a certain amount of repetition, which is inevitable from the way the whole subject has grown up; as the Qualities involve the Figures, so the Poetic arts and species involve the qualities; but these last bring to light points and effects that would not come easily under either the Figures or the Qualities. The thing for us to recognize is, that there is no clear line of demarcation between the three divisions. We are dealing with an exceedingly complex and multifold vesture, and, in order to examine it in an articulate way, we must have a very wide series of designations to bring to bear upon it; designations often overlapping, but yet useful from varying the point of approach to suit the particular occasion.

The human feelings are either Sensations or Emotions. Our sensations are a great source of our pleasures, but only a part of these can be introduced into Art. The pleasures of sight and hearing are the most elevated; and the ideas of these enter largely into poetry, as pictures to the imagination, and as language to the ear.

Next are the Emotions: of which two classes are fundamental, and go far to exhaust our emotional nature; the one class, the Irascible or malevolent group; the other the Amicable, loving, or benevolent. The influence of these comes out in direct and unmistakable forms; and also in many subtle transformations, not always easy to trace. By virtue of a class of objects that face both ways at once, there is a kind of transition from the one to the other, notwithstanding their widely opposite nature.

The Malignant passion may be conceived as the human survival of the passion for prey in the lower animals. It gives a positive delight in the sufferings of other beings, although there are usually certain disguises or pretexts whereby we justify to ourselves the infliction of suffering. Revenge is the most usual manifestation of this species of delight.

The counter passion of Love and Benevolence is also a grand source of pleasure, and is largely involved in all the productions of Art. Through it we take delight in representations of love and goodness ; these show Art in its most humanizing aspect.

The Emotion termed Sublimity is connected with vastness of Power ; which sometimes takes the form of maleficent power, and sometimes of beneficent ; while at other times, it is simply a possibility of one or the other. In parsing for the quality of Sublimity in style, we should make the distinction as far as we are able.

The effect called Pathos belongs almost exclusively to the Tender, Amicable, or Loving Emotion. Its most representative aspect comes out when we make use of the Emotion as a means of soothing and consoling the mind under pain. The Beautiful, in a somewhat narrow sense, and in contrast to the Sublime, is partly concerned with the manifestations of Tender Feeling. In a wider sense, Beauty, or the Beautiful, is co-extensive with Fine Art as a whole.

A scale of the effects growing out of the two grand master passions, may be drawn thus :—

1. Maleficence, pure.
2. Malignant Revenge.
3. Righteous Indignation.
4. Destructive Sublime.
5. Neutral Sublime,—Power as simple possibility.
6. Beneficent Sublime, as triumph over mischievous agents.
7. Constructive Beneficence.
8. Love, as Active.
9. Affection, in its typical purity.
10. Sorrow and Pathos.

The first four are the gradations of Malevolence in Strength, or Sublimity. The fifth is Strength, in a neutral form, not openly suggesting either of the two great passions. The last five are the modes of the Tender Emotion; the order is inverted, by way of showing the transition from the one class to the other, by the intermediate quality of neutral Strength.

In a systematic course of Rhetoric, these would be all exemplified *seriatim*; and to pupils of advanced classes, they would readily become intelligible. They present a gradation from Sublimity to Pathos, and show intermediate stages partaking of both qualities; it being a possibility of the mind to entertain at once the two opposite modes of feeling, by merely presenting them in different connections. Each of the two classes has its pleasures, and a mixed glow is producible through their being skilfully combined, or, at all events, rapidly alternated.

Humour and the Comic are supposed to be based on our malevolent feelings, qualified and transformed by subtle arts, and by an admixture of the amicable passion. I do not attempt, in the present short series of lessons, to deal (beyond a slight occasional allusion) with this peculiar class of effects; we shall have enough to occupy us in endeavouring to analyze the serious qualities.

The arts that render language itself, as addressing the ear, a source of charm, are not difficult to reduce to rule or law. We must be content with adverting to marked instances of the effect.

In Poetry, images, individually operating on our strong feelings, are accumulated in masses, for still greater effect. But cumulation or combination gives opportunity for the highest art of the poet, which is to *harmonize* all the different influences that come together at the same time. Harmony is a thing of many degrees; and its appreciation is an admirable exercise, preparing the pupil for the highest strokes of the

critical art. Nor is it beyond the powers of such pupils as are expected to profit by readings in Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton.

Without dwelling farther on generalities, let us proceed with the examination of passages.

LESSON I.

I find in the prescription of the Code for pupil teachers' examinations, under "Grammar and Composition, *first year*"—Parsing from the Fourth Canto of *Childe Harold*, stanzas 1-48, 140 to end; and, although no single poem or poet is enough to give illustrative scope for the poetic qualities, yet this canto is particularly rich for the purpose. The exact use to be made of it depends partly on the appositeness and prominence of the illustrations, and partly on the stage of teaching. I will suppose, however, that nothing has gone before to supersede the lessons of its best passages.

Take, then, the opening stanza, and consider its capabilities, under the heads of Figures, Qualities, and Poetic Arts.

I stood in Venice, on the Bridge of Sighs ;
 A palace and a prison on each hand :
 I saw from out the wave her structures rise
 As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand.
 A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
 Around me, and a dying glory smiles
 O'er the far times, when many a subject land
 Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
 Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles !

This bristles with poetic effects and qualities, and could be pressed into the service for a very wide illustration. But having before us the 97 stanzas of the Code prescription, we can pass over effects given more saliently in other places.

The "Bridge of Sighs" is not the poet's invention, but an appropriate and harmonious adaptation to the strain of the whole Canto.

“A palace and a prison on each hand”—a striking effect of contrast, not poetically pleasing, certainly, but tragically exciting.

I saw from out the wave her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand.

Here the Rhetorician can exemplify his Apostrophe, pushed to the point called Vision. Better still, however, is the stanza of the “Dying Gladiator”. The simile can next be noticed; its effect is to vivify with a pictorial comparison the poet's idea of the rapid growth of Venice. The resemblance is not novel, but is apposite, and therefore effective. It lends force, or strength, to the description.

A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me,

The peculiar grandeur, touched with pathos, of length of time. A figure of the Metonymy class might be exemplified from the language.

—and a dying glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles!

Continuation of the pathos of past ages, and an independent picture of the national greatness of Venice, set out with bold figures, and a grand personification, apposite and powerful without being original.

Of the stanza as a whole, we pronounce the individual figures striking and well chosen, the emotional qualities of pathos and strength agreeably mingled; while the Poetic arts of concreteness, picturesqueness, and harmonious grouping, are well exemplified. As it is necessary to be critical, in order to fasten attention on the positive and unquestionable merits, we might say that the juxtaposition of the palace and the prison, and indeed the introduction of a prison at all, is a sort of jar in the midst of the other imagery.

In the second stanza, the poet, warming with the flow of his own fancy, attains still greater heights, and pours out his imagery in even greater luxuriance. The poem has not a finer stanza.

She looked a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
 Rising with her tiara of proud towers
 At airy distance, with majestic motion,
 A ruler of the waters and their powers :
 And such she was ; her daughters had their dowers
 From spoils of nations, and the exhaustless East
 Poured in her lap all gems in sparkling showers.
 In purple was she robed, and of her feast
 Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased.

The whole may be described as sustaining and carrying out the personification with a series of details, each one a bold figure in itself. Illustrative examples might be made of them all, if necessary for the stage of teaching at the time. The conclusion :—

of her feast
 Monarchs partook, and deem'd their dignity increased.

is a highly suggestive circumstance, and is of sufficient power to make the climax.

After the examination of these two stanzas, which might be as minute as we please, for Figures, Qualities, and Poetic Arts, we might pick and choose from the rest, according as they present effective examples in the same strain. But, before ranging farther, let me turn the first stanza to account, as an example of the Paraphrase, or the turning of poetry into prose. The question, then, is, does the composition rise above the level of the highest prose style? If it does, we must decline touching it. Paraphrase in that case is destruction, and to raise a new composition from the ruins does not, as I conceive, answer any purpose of teaching, or indeed any purpose whatever. Let us see, then, what changes are admissible without lowering the tone of the passage :—

“In Venice I stood on the Bridge of Sighs. On one hand was a palace; on the other hand a prison.” [This at least improves the grammar.] “As from the stroke of an enchanter’s wand, I saw her structures rise from the wave. Around me, a thousand years expand their cloudy wings. There smiled a dying glory over the far times, when many a subject land looked to the marble piles of the Winged Lion, where sat Venice (in state), throned on her hundred isles.”

This is not too high for prose, although a prose writer would not, perhaps, have cast it exactly in this mould. You may ask, What do we get by so slight a transformation? The answer is, for one thing we have a good lesson in arrangement, which is never thrown away. For another thing, we judge whether the poet’s *verse* is felicitous, or has a music and charm of its own; for, if so, the conservation of the figures does not save us from the consciousness of a great fall. In the case before us, this point will be judged variously. The decision would be accompanied with a judgment on Byron’s metrical felicity in general.

Ranging now through the remainder of the cantos, I shall be very brief and merely indicate choice. For special effects of a high and technical order, the concluding portion is richest. There we have the Dying Gladiator and the Coliseum, the Roman daughter that suckled her condemned father, the Pantheon, the Vatican with its treasures, the death of Princess Charlotte, and the Ocean. The quality of Pathos receives a copious exemplification, perhaps the one effect most rarely attained in fulness or purity; the scope for criticism is thus proportionally great.

A few words on one of the themes,—the “Ocean”. The mingled emotions of this splendid passage afford fine scope for analysis; and no unusual subtlety is required. Great problems running through all poetry, the counterpart of similar problems

in life, are started, and so raised into prominence that better examples can scarcely be hit upon. For one thing, while the chief source of sublimity is plainly seen to be vast power, the connection of this with destructive manifestations is also apparent. Well, then, does it not seem strange that we should be thrilled, elated, delighted, by the contemplation of a power that is making perpetual havoc of our own kind? Is it the case that these stanzas affect us more than would a similarly sustained picture of the Ocean in its beneficent sublimity as the highway of nations, the means of defence to insular peoples, the source of food materials, and much else? That the whole description is the poetry of our malevolent emotions, the slightest reflection will suffice to show, while the justification for letting them loose is unusually slight. It is that man himself "marks the earth with ruin," on account of which we are to feel a sort of exultant revenge when, "howling to his gods," one of ourselves is dashed on some shore, with the comforting words, "There let him lay".

In this passage, but still more on the equally sustained stanzas devoted to the death of Princess Charlotte, there is a fine opportunity for marking the line that divides pity from terror, pathos from horror. The circumstances productive of genuine pathos are admirably indicated; if these had been previously expounded in a skeleton arrangement, in the system of the Qualities, here would be a good opportunity of concrete exemplifications. The domestic affections are the strong case of pathetic interest; domestic sorrows are the most moving form of the pity that is its own solace; while it has always to be considered whether and how far the treatment redeems the horror of the tale. I shall have to return to this passage at a later stage.

In the next and following examples, the criticism will be still more minute and searching.

Campbell's *Ode to the Rainbow* affords fine scope for the exhibition of poetic qualities.

Triumphal arch that fill'st the sky,
 When storms prepare to part !
 I ask not proud Philosophy
 To teach me what thou art.

The two first lines contain an image of neutral sublimity, referring to one of the grandest objects of nature. The poetic art lies in providing a verbal expression that recalls the original, and heightens the effect by an apt comparison, and a well-chosen adjunct. The metaphor—"triumphal arch"—heightens the sublimity by the feelings associated with victory, the foundation of which is our maleficent emotions; augmented by various other well-known circumstances of delight. There is thus introduced an effective touch of genuine sublimity. The associated circumstance—"When storms prepare to part"—is a continuation of the same effect. The feeling associated with storms is the sentiment of power as destructive energy. The poet selects these two heightening expressions as his first effort at a poetic rendering of his subject. He does not adhere to this view in the remainder of the poem, as we shall see.

The second couplet—"I ask not proud philosophy"—is an innuendo, setting forth the superiority of feeling to science, which the poet expands in a subsequent stanza. The phrase "proud philosophy" might illustrate the heightening of an inanimate subject by a personifying metaphor—"proud": a word with a certain dignified, lofty meaning, but here used in a depreciatory sense, which the word also bears, when the pride is unjustifiable or undeserved; the effect then is a touch of scorn or contempt, a feeling coming within the compass of poetry, by the scope given to our malevolent passion.

We can here make use of the phrase—"When storms prepare to part"—as an illustration of the legitimate paraphras-

ing of poetic language. The meaning would be rendered in prose by 'depart,' 'cease,' 'come to an end'.

The second stanza is—

Still seem, as to my childhood's sight,
A midway station given
For happy spirits to alight
Betwixt the earth and heaven.

The poet now passes from the rendering of sublimity, so effective in the previous stanza, and here evokes the tender and pathetic feeling, which is sustained throughout several of the subsequent stanzas. The object is naturally sublime from its magnitude; yet poetry is not content with ringing the changes on the one principal quality of anything, provided other effects can be superinduced. The sublime and the pathetic carry the mind in different directions, but we can alternate from one to the other without undue violence to our feelings.

The phrase, "my childhood's sight," transporting us back to the simplicity and fondness of our early years, yields a poetical effect of the nature of pathetic or tender feeling. This is carried out in the idea of the two last lines—"for happy spirits to alight betwixt the earth and heaven". A picture of celestial bliss necessarily engages our soft affections and pleasing emotions. The danger now is to keep clear of the maudlin, which we readily run into, when affection is iterated in hackneyed phraseology. The poet is more successful in some of the other stanzas, where his originality has a redeeming power.

Can all that optics teach unfold
Thy form to please me so,
As when I dreamt of gems and gold
Hid in thy radiant bow?

Here there is a carrying out of the notion started in the first stanzas, namely, the inferiority of science to poetry or feeling in the handling of nature. The introduction of the contrast is perhaps the only questionable thing in the ode.

There is no need to disparage science in order to elevate poetry ; each stands on its own independent merits, and a poet should rather avoid than seek occasion of quarrel. He must evoke the malign passions occasionally, in order to sound all the notes of our emotional nature ; but more suitable subjects should be found than the scientific mode of viewing the world, even though that mode has sometimes a disenchanting effect. The two first lines might be dispensed with, and the two last might then run on—

'Twas then I dreamt of gems and gold
Hid in thy radiant bow.

The continuation of the fancy of childhood is well sustained by the choice of the glittering objects—gems and gold—and by the kindred metaphor “radiant,” which brings to view an attribute of the sun—the sublimest object of the physical world.

The fourth stanza carries on the strife between poetry and science ; the force and elevation of the language going far to atone for the unseemliness of the quarrel.

When science from Creation's face
Enchantment's veil withdraws,
What lovely visions yield their place
To cold material laws.

“Creation's face” belongs to the language of the sublime, from the comprehensiveness of the word, and the personification implied in it. “Enchantment's veil” expresses a high intensity of human pleasure, and is, from that cause, pleasing, if not vulgarized by a common-place setting. “Lovely visions” also expresses delight, and is eminently poetic, being the poetry of our affectionate nature. The final touch—“cold material laws”—gives us a kind of shudder, and is of itself a disagreeable suggestion, but for the use made of it, namely, to excite a burst of indignation against science. The objection to the whole is that we cannot work ourselves up into a sense

of the injury done us by science, sufficient to justify a copious and luxurious outburst of indignant passion. In the conjunction, "cold material," there is a harmonious fitting of the two words, arising from the kindred emotional meanings; and harmony is always poetic.

The fifth stanza takes a higher flight—

And yet, fair bow, no fabling dreams,
But words of the Most High,
Have told why first thy robe of beams
Was woven in the sky.

Several of the arts of elevated style can here be exemplified. The bold Apostrophe is the setting of the whole. The strain is not markedly sublime, and not markedly pathetic or tender; it is the energetic assertion of a truth, enhanced by the power of contrast, and rendered touching by the emotional force of the several epithets employed. The opinion so strongly maintained is not very fortunate, seeing that it refers to one of the oldest difficulties in the Mosaic narrative. Poets have no right to dogmatise where competent authorities express doubt. But, waiving this objection, the stanza is a masterpiece of language; and every point admits of being rendered illustrative. The energetic contrast, "no fabling dreams," heightens the force of the assertion; and it is a case where contrast is not superfluous. The fine figure in the two last lines can be studied as an elegant and elevating similitude. The phrase "words of the Most High" as a figure for the Bible record, is in itself grand, and is brought in so as to avoid the tameness of familiarity.

When o'er the green undeluged earth
Heaven's cov'nant thou didst shine,
How came the world's gray fathers forth
To watch thy sacred sign!

The poet here turns our thoughts to the significance of the bow, as an assurance against the re-flooding of the earth; and sets forth a poetic circumstance yielding the pathos of devout

feeling. The most venerable representatives of the race, after the flood, "the world's gray fathers," are summoned to do homage on the occurrence of the sign. "The green undeluged earth" is a poetic condensation, which may be expanded in prose—"the green earth, never again to come under a deluge—to be flooded". Or, the meaning may be—freed from the effects of the deluge. The epithet "sacred" chimes in with the general effect.

And when its yellow lustre smiled
O'er mountains yet untrod,
Each mother held aloft her child
To bless the bow of God.

A new picture is here given made up of epithets and circumstances, intended to enhance the glory of the object, and to make still farther use of the pathos of devoutness and gratitude. The combination "yellow lustre smiled" is somewhat forced, but yet within the licence of poetry. The act of smiling would, no doubt, be better suited by something more personal than yellow lustre; but the emotional meanings of the words are not in any way discordant. The circumstance—"O'er mountains yet untrod"—may be supposed to refer to the time immediately succeeding the flood, when the re-peopleing of the earth had proceeded a very little way—an inference that does not at once disclose itself. The more obvious suggestion of mountain solitudes would not conspire to the intended effect. The figure of the two last lines has undoubtedly the beauty of pathos, adding to the effect of the "gray fathers" in the previous stanza. A bolder and more successful flight awaits us in the next stanza.

Methinks thy jubilee to keep,
The first-made anthem rang
On earth, delivered from the deep,
And the first poet sang.

Bating the extravagance of the sentiment, the stanza is very

grand, both from the ring of the language and the choice of the circumstances. These circumstances contribute to heighten the grandeur of the subject, provided only we do not begin to feel that it is overdone. The poet himself does not feel so, for he grows warmer with his theme, and rises to a still higher flight in the stanza that follows.

Nor ever shall the Muse's eye
Unraptured greet thy beam :
Theme of primeval prophecy,
Be still the poet's theme !

The loftiness of this sentence arises from the strain of exultation of the poet, drawing upon the dignity and greatness of his art, and expressing it by choice and compact language. We hear of the "Muse" in the poetry of all ages ; but it never loses its associations of dignity and charm. The personification in the two first lines is vivid and terse. The effect approaches the sublime, rather than the tender mood. The two last lines derive their force from the magniloquent reference ("primeval prophecy") to the old subject, the prediction to Noah, and from the bold apostrophe—"be still the poet's theme".

We have next two exquisite stanzas, cast out of the permanent adjuncts of the bow, and independent of the connection with the deluge.

The earth to thee her incense yields,
The lark thy welcome sings,
When, glitt'ring in the freshened fields,
The snowy mushroom springs.

The beauty here ranges with tender feeling. The selection of circumstances fitted to enter into harmonious combination is everything that a poet could wish. The first line is a poetic rendering of the vapour that rises after rain, under the influence of the sun ; it is poetized by the metaphor "incense," redolent of perfume and associations of sacredness. The

appearing of the lark is an observed fact in the same circumstances. The two last lines gather in a new circumstance from the rain—the bursting out of the mushroom growths in the fields. If this incident were viewed in its naked aspect, it would fail to lend the expected agreeable additions to the grouping; but, as expressed in the poet's phraseology ("glittering and snowy"), and dignified with his impressive metre, it answers his intentions in composing a group of heightening accompaniments to the main theme.

How glorious is thy girdle cast
O'er mountain, tower, and town,
Or mirrored in the ocean vast,
A thousand fathoms down !

A truly magnificent stanza—the sublimest in the piece. The figure Exclamation, is the setting of the whole; in conformity with the usage of the figure, the verb "is," in the first line, might be omitted. The sublime aspect of the rainbow, from its celestial dimensions and span, is here done justice to once more; improving upon the two first lines of the opening stanza. The vastness of the embrace is pictured forth by the choice of the most conspicuous and grand of the objects of the earth—"mountain, tower, and town"; a grouping which, if not a climax, is not an anticlimax: a town, in one view, has not the sublimity of the mountain, yet it has a counterbalancing importance from its aggregate of objects and interests. But for the highly effective emphasis of the word as closing the line, "city" would be preferable from its greater dignity of associations: as in Milton's prospect from the mountain of temptation—"Huge cities and high tow'r'd".

The two last lines bring in the ocean with greater effect, although with some licence of imagination. The wide ocean is one of our sublime terrestrial objects; and its character in that respect is helped out by the powerful epithet "vast"; while the line has Campbell's usual energy of metre. The

“mirroring” is an attempt to extend the image of the bow, although the “thousand fathoms down” is a splendid expression for what cannot be measured.

The poet returns once more to the historical aspect of the bow; and embodies with it the poetic touches of the two concluding stanzas.

As fresh in yon horizon dark,
As young thy beauties seem,
As when the eagle from the ark
First sported in thy beam.

This is legitimate poetic thought. The phenomena of the world that are naturally imperishable or undecaying can be placed in effective contrast with the numerous examples of decay that we are destined to experience. The negative of such a painful circumstance as perishability and mortality constitutes a high and impressive merit, and enters into our permanent phraseology of laudation. “The eagle from the ark” plays an expressive part, as did the previous introduction of the lark, contributing to the sublime aspect of the subject, which the poet handles alternately with the other.

For, faithful to its sacred page,
Heaven still rebuilds thy span,
Nor lets the type grow pale with age
That first spoke peace to man.

“Heaven” is here endowed with its double function—namely, as the source of Bible inspiration, and as the prime mover of the natural world. The benign aspect of sublimity is well exemplified in the union of the different strains; while there is an iteration of the negative of decay, coupled with the benign reference to the goodness of Heaven as its cause.

LESSON II.

In the preceding lesson, a view was given of the scheme of qualities growing out of the two most fundamental emotions of the human mind. These emotions do not include all poetic

interest ; yet their direct and indirect influences, taken together, make up a very large mass of feeling. The fact that some theories of Beauty—those of Alison and Jeffrey—rest upon them exclusively is an indication of their reach or comprehensiveness.

Nevertheless, incompleteness attaches to any view of Art that excludes the primary effects of the higher senses—Sight and Hearing. There are intrinsic pleasures of colour, which count for a large share of the interest of a painting : and there are intrinsic pleasures of sound, which count in music and in speech. Still, the larger part of all the charms imparted through these senses, must be attributed to *associated circumstances*, and such associations are chiefly made up of the two great primary emotions, and derivatives from them. The Alison and Jeffrey theories erred only in regarding emotional association as the whole fact ; which was to deny to the Senses, as such, the power of contributing to our pleasures.

When the associated emotions of an object of sense are the predominant feature, the terms used for the effect fall under the vocabulary of the Emotions as set forth in the last lesson. The glow of sunset has an intrinsic effect of colour, and a super-added effect of vastness and power. It is the latter that determines the epithets employed to describe it : as, for example, gorgeous, glorious, grand, overpowering, sublime. The violet, the daisy, the daffodil, have their pleasing colours, but are still more pleasing in their suggestion of tender emotion, through their being partially personified.

The charm of colour by itself needs a combination of mass, intensity, brilliancy and harmony, such as is occasionally found in nature, but is more completely realized in art. A great work of coloured design would be described by epithets expressing pleasure without involving the two great sources of special emotion : such are,—fine, gay, charming, pleasing, exquisite, delightful, tasteful, beautiful, enchanting, sweet, bright, brilliant,

dazzling, graceful, fairy-like, polished. To use such a word as "lovely" is not to refer the pleasure to the loving or tender emotion, but to employ it as a figurative expression for pleasure. The nomenclature of criticism must provide for this class of effects, which belong to all forms of art. It may be remarked, however, that when the language rises to a great pitch of intensity, there is sure to be a complex product of sense and emotion.

The intrinsic pleasures of the ear receive a good many of the same epithets as those of the eye, together with a few specially belonging to effects of sound—as melodious, mellifluous, silvery, sonorous, resounding, tuneful, dulcet, thrilling, musical, harmonious, deep, full, swelling, dying-away, soul-stirring.

Next to these positive pleasures, arising from the stimulation of the mind by proper sources of pleasure, are to be ranked the pleasures due to relief from pains. These play a great part in actual life, and are admitted into art. The beauty of smooth-working machinery, and of the appearances that suggest ease—such as polish and absence of friction—is dependent on the sense of pain from what is difficult and laborious; the reaction from this may be attended with some of our highest thrills of delight. It is a favourite device of art to plunge us into a painful state, in order to give us the enjoyable rebound of deliverance. This, however, requires a dexterous adjustment, so as to make sure that there is a gain on the whole.

The foregoing observations are meant to enlarge our critical vocabulary, although farther additions are still necessary in order to a complete exegesis of emotional effects. Coupled with the explanations in the previous lesson, they will enable us to take a wider scope in criticizing the examples now to be adduced.

I will select for study one of the poetical treasures of the lan-

guage—Shelley's "Skylark". The genius of Shelley has been exhaustively depicted by our greatest critics. The following sentence from Leigh Hunt will introduce our critical examination of a few stanzas of his exquisite ode. "His poetry is as full of mountains, seas, and skies, of light and darkness, and the seasons, and all the elements of being, as if Nature herself had written it, with the creation and its hopes newly cast around her; not, it must be confessed, without too indiscriminate a mixture of great and small, and a want of sufficient shade,—a certain chaotic brilliancy 'dark with excess of light'."

One object of these Lessons on the Emotional Qualities, is to show the way of illustrating in minute detail, and by specific examples, the general deliverances of critics on the merits and defects of our great authors.

The *Ode to a Skylark* is an extraordinary tissue of sustained imagery, derived from both the animate and the inanimate world. The first question that would naturally arise is, whether the subject has sufficient intrinsic merits to bear such a gorgeous accumulation of circumstances. To answer this in the negative would be set down as the proof of a cold and prosaic nature. Still, there is no evading the enquiry—what are the limits, if any, to the poetical aggrandisement of familiar things? Is the reader, from his previous knowledge of the skylark, in a frame of mind to accept the unmeasured laudation heaped upon it in the ode? In other words, is it free from the danger of appearing so great a departure from all truth or probability, that we entirely lose the pleasure of adaptation or fitness of expression, and are gratified only by the profusion of glowing imagery, for which the subject has merely supplied a pretext? There can be no doubt of the eminent value of a composition that adorns within the limits of truth, or with a very slight departure from those limits. But when a poet accustoms his muse to exaggeration in small matters, there come occasions when the effect is seriously perverting.

With this reluctant *caveat*, let us quote a few stanzas.

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

The Apostrophe is a good setting for the commencement. The epithet "blithe" is happy and quite within bounds. Whether the lark's feelings accord with the music of its song, we cannot tell, but we are prepared for a certain harmony between feeling and expression all through the animal kingdom. "Bird thou never wert" is a hyperbole, following out "blithe spirit" and not repugnant to our usages in speaking of what we like. The three remaining lines are also pitched high, but not too high. It is allowable to make use of the lofty associations of Heaven, when we wish to praise anything that we deem very lovely. "Pourest thy full heart" is a becoming hyperbole; and "unpremeditated art" is fairly applicable, although, as an epithet, more of an intellectual than of an emotional cast. It has the strength or impressiveness of a negative word, without possessing the unction of poetry.

Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing, still dost soar, and soaring, ever singest.

There is nothing specially remarkable till we come to the bold simile in the third line—"Like a cloud of fire, the blue deep thou wingest". The incongruity in the comparison of the lark to a cloud of fire is evident; and the effect sought must be in the community of the emotional effect; but, even in this view, it does not recommend itself by any obvious fitness, except as keeping up the hyperbolical strain of the poem. "The blue deep thou wingest" is by itself an expressive touch, and fits the reality. The Alexandrine, however, is what re-

deems and ennobles the stanza. It is a felicitous application of balanced phraseology, cast in a melodious line. The conjoined soaring and singing is represented in a way that could hardly be surpassed.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are brightening,
Thou dost float and run ;
Like an unbodied joy, whose race is just begun.

The poet now attempts a bolder flight ; and gives us a sun-set picture. "The golden lightning" seems a doubtful conjunction. The epithet is not applicable to lightning. The meaning is made more consistent, if we read 'lightening' ; an emendation actually adopted by Chambers. "The sunken sun" scarcely contributes to a picture of glorification ; the word "sink" is associated with depression and pathos. No doubt the poet sought to vary the common designations of the setting sun. "O'er which clouds are brightening" is an expressive picture in itself ; but there is a want of felt coherence in the entire grouping. "Thou dost float and run:" "float" is a fine metaphor ; so fine that its commonness does not do away with its effect. The propriety of "run" to express a mode of flight is doubtful ; probably it came in by the compulsion of the rhyme. The concluding line is one of Shelley's gorgeous similes from the feelings. An effort is required to realize the meaning ; and when we do realize it, we must acknowledge that there is some straining. We understand a "joy" by itself, but the embodying of it rather puzzles us ; and we are not accustomed to materialize our feelings by first putting them into a body, and then making them run a race : all which has to be done, before we apply the combination to illustrate the flight of the lark.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight ;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

We are here carried a stage farther into night. "The pale purple even" is an apt conjunction of epithets. The addition of "melting around thy flight" is not easily conceivable as an intellectual image; the word "melt" does not compensate, by its emotional associations, for indistinctness of imagery. The last three lines contain a lofty simile, somewhat enfeebled by the filling up. The phrase "of heaven" contributes nothing to the force of the name "star". "In the broad daylight" is an addition to the wordiness. The two lines in one—"Like a star in daylight"—might have been preferable. "Thou art unseen" is a just application of the simile; but the point is marred by the clause—"but yet I hear thy shrill delight". This fact would need to be detached wholly from the comparison to a star. The words "shrill delight" might be dispensed with in favour of the simple fact of being heard; the weakness of the ode being the tendency to cloy with luscious imagery. The next stanza is in continuation—

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel, that it is there.

This must be taken as a protracted simile to heighten the "shrill delight". The idea of the former stanza is awkwardly repeated; the moon taking the place of the stars: but, instead of being an independent picture, it is meant as an appendage to the preceding. The shrill delight is said to be keen as the arrows of the silver sphere, which describes the moon; the epithet "silver" being habitual with the poets in this application. The picture is first to be viewed as a poetical rendering of the moon's fading under the dawn. The language is undoubtedly choice and impressive; but there is not much to come home to us in the entire conception. The word "narrowing" has not much propriety for the moon's diminished power as the dawn approaches; nor is the situation of our being reduced to "feel" its presence

necessarily exciting to minds of ordinary imaginative power. The effect of the entire stanza, as a simile to enhance the shrill delight of the lark, cannot be said to be great; the unlikeness overpowers any likeness that the poet may have been able to fancy.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud

The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

Granting the exaggeration that pervades the entire poem, this is a finely-conceived stanza, and is highly illustrative of the qualities and arts of poetry. The situation in the first couplet is simple and yet grand. The word "loud" is forced by the rhyme to cloud; otherwise we might have had "resounds". There is a figure named the 'transferred epithet,' which the poet's use of the word might exemplify. The simile in the three concluding lines is both gorgeous and apt, if we make allowance for the disparity of light and sound. "As, when night is *bare*," does not on the instant suggest the meaning of clear or cloudless; but is yet within the licence of poetry. "From one lonely cloud, the moon rains out her beams" is an impressive situation, if not coming too soon after the employment of the moon in the previous stanza. For "heaven is over-flowed" we might have the continuation of the active voice, and "overflows the heaven".

What thou art, we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see

As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

The poet now invests his subject with the charm of mystery. This attribute, however, applies to so many things, and is so well worn, that it scarcely stirs our feelings. The question "What is most like thee?" might have been earlier; there being already a whole string of comparisons provided. The start is

not new, and the images are from sources already drawn upon. The drops from rainbow clouds have the brightness due to sunshine; and the poet thus adds something to the ordinary image of a rain-shower. Still, we may hesitate about the intrinsic force of the comparison of the lark's song to a *rain* of melody.

Like a poet hidden
 In the light of thought,
 Singing hymns unbidden,
 Till the world is wrought
 To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

Poets in all ages have described their own vocation in choice and thrilling numbers. The stanza may be viewed rather in this aspect, than as appropriate to the subject. We see, as in other stanzas, that the necessity of the metre is an obstacle to the coherence of the imagery. There is a poetic propriety in the expression "light of thought"; the difficulty lies in combining it with the "poet hidden": light and concealment do not go well together. Milton's "darkness visible" is not the same case. Nor does the word "hidden," which receives so much emphasis from its position, connect itself clearly with poetic inspiration, in any view of it. "Singing hymns unbidden" is somewhat obscure; the word "unbidden" is fine intelligible Saxon; but the more obvious meaning does not strike us with any force. It may, however, mean the same as "unpremeditated" in the first stanza, and so give the idea of spontaneous flow. The two concluding lines contain an expression in unadorned terms of the poet's influence; the thought is more considered than the language. The stanza cannot be pronounced eminently successful even in its primary intention.

Like a high-born maiden
 In a palace tower
 Soothing her love-laden
 Soul in secret hour
 With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower.

Here we have a love picture under imposing circumstances. The maiden is high-born, her abode is a palace. The bearing of the word "tower" is ambiguous. It may be simply an appendage of the palace; but it may be something more. We are accustomed, in Romance, to towers as places of imprisonment, and there is an evident pathos of loneliness in the picture; while "the secret hour" suggests the need of concealment. The separation of "love-laden" and "soul" is a sacrifice to metrical necessity. The last line has a fine melody of rhythmical movement; but if a logical comparison were admissible in the criticism, we might say that the poet is illustrating in a circle. The music is brought in to intensify the love, while the love is needed to give impressiveness to the music. Grammatically, the "music" and not the "love" should be in contact with the relative "which".

Like a glow-worm golden
 In a dell of dew,
 Scattering un beholden
 Its aërial hue

Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view.

This is rather a descent from the superb picture of the previous stanza; but the poet is not marching to a climax. The new situation is melodiously rendered, like the rest; yet, intrinsically, it seems inferior, rather than superior, in force to the main subject. It is difficult to say whether "golden" adds anything to the glow-worm, except through its emotional association of worth and brilliancy: yet, partly by this association and partly by its metrical fitness, it makes an impressive line. The phrase "in a dell of dew" gives a fine and expressive placing to the glow-worm. "Scattering un beholden its aërial hue" has the air of a paradox; we are to conceive the glow-worm, and yet it must be working unseen by any one: "its aërial hue" is a little far-fetched in meaning, although admirable in sound; "aërial" must not be taken in its primitive sense of the air,

but in one of the associated and poetical meanings of air—the refined, exquisite, subtle, half-spiritual association. The Alexandrine completes the idea of concealment; “among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view”. There is still poetry in the situation “among the flowers and grass” from the recognized emotional meanings of the words; but the relative clause is prosaic in comparison with the terseness of “scattering unbeholden”.

Like a rose embowered
 In its own green leaves
 By warm winds deflowered
 Till the scent it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves.

The first two lines yield a fine situation, by the help of the metaphor “embowered,” and the “green leaves”. The third line—“by warm winds deflowered”—is a harmonious addition. There is a clash in the word “deflowered,” between its highly-metaphorical use, and its literal meaning, which we can scarcely help applying to the situation, thereby causing incongruity. The stress of the stanza seems laid on the scent given forth, which is heightened by the last line—“makes faint with too much sweet the heavy-winged thieves”—namely, the warm winds.

Taking these four last stanzas together, we find the one pervading thought of working unseen, unobserved. The lark is supposed to pour out its song from mere exuberance, regardless of an audience.

Sound of vernal showers
 On the twinkling grass,
 Rain-awakened flowers,
 All that ever was

Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

The first two lines give us one situation poetically rendered, and the third another. Each may be examined on its own merits as a pictorial effect. The “twinkling grass” is a striking and suggestive conjunction of the poetic stamp; the

emotional effect is to glitter or to dazzle, rather than to excite feeling or pathos. "Rain-awakened flowers" is a happy condensation, likewise calculated to recall a pleasant situation, and to aggrandize it at the same time, as is the purpose of poetic language. In the last line, we have merely an accumulation of well-chosen epithets, to give a sweeping general effect; and the stanza winds up by the heightening comparison, "thy music doth surpass".

While the individual stanzas now reviewed have each their poetical merit, more or less assignable and pronounced, we feel, as we go on, that the poet is talking wild, or without set purpose. He is accumulating pleasant images, as such, which might be applied to any pleasant subject whatever, and have no special application to the song of the lark. Indeed, there is manifest straining throughout, in bringing images of visible beauty to compare with an effect of music or sound. The author makes scarcely any attempt to find similes of melody, but assumes an extraordinary pitch of joyous feeling in the lark as evidenced by its note, and selects at random what he considers the most joyous situations in the beauties of nature and life. His imagery gives occasion for poetic groupings and similes of high merit. They have, however, the fault of being mostly addressed to highly-susceptible minds, and not to the average of human beings. This is as much an error in poetry, as when a scientific expositor considers only minds of his own stamp, and does not illustrate down to the level of an ordinary understanding.

Comparison is the best aid to criticism and to teaching alike. Let us, therefore, search out illustrative parallels.

The lark has been always a poet's theme. Wordsworth would not be likely to leave it untouched. He has not the gorgeousness of Shelley, but yet he seizes the poetic aspects with a truer instinct.

Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !
 For thy song, lark, is strong ;
 Up with me, up with me into the clouds !
 Singing, singing,
 With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
 Lift me, guide me till I find
 That spot which seems so to thy mind.

This corresponds to Shelley's second stanza quoted above ; the combined soaring and music being the pre-eminent features of the lark. To Wordsworth's imagination there is the farther idea, not given so plainly in Shelley, of mounting along with it to its own ethereal abode ; a daring supposition, but not beyond the limits of poetry, or the compass of our sympathetic longings. Still more characteristic of Wordsworth is the next stanza :—

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
 And to-day my heart is weary ;
 Had I now the wings of a Faery,
 Up to thee would I fly.

The miseries of earth are to be met by the charm and elevation of fancy that the lark can yield ; and the poet accordingly waxes hyperbolic in its praise :—

There is madness about thee, and joy divine
 In that song of thine ;
 Lift me, guide me high and high
 To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

“Madness,” in order to harmonize with “joy divine,” must be taken in the poetic sense of ecstasy. The last two lines repeat, under a new figuré, the idea of going with the lark to its supposed home. “Banqueting-place” carries us to the meetings of the gods. A stanza of mere eulogy follows :—

Joyous as morning,
 Thou art laughing and scorning,
 Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
 And though little troubled with sloth,
 Drunken lark ! thou wouldst be loth
 To be such a traveller as I.

There is a slight jar in the word "Drunken"; for although it is admissible as a figure of intensity, the setting should preclude the idea of degrading intoxication.

The last stanza urges again the weariness and pains of our life journey, and refers for full consolation to the presence of the lark and of the birds generally.

A second ode iterates the ideas of conjoined music and soaring. The third and last stanza is a fine composition of effects. The ideas are the same, but the expression is still more highly wrought.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine ;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine ;
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam ;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home !

Wordsworth's distinction, as compared with Shelley, consists in keeping closer to his subject, in selecting the salient peculiarities of the lark and no other. His praise of the lark's music would, in itself, be superfluous and overdone, if it were not couched in phraseology both apposite and fresh. An experience so familiar need not be described at all; or if it be, the description should be such as to aggrandise the literal effect. Common-place epithets of intensity are superfluous.

Another interesting comparison may be drawn from the poetic treatment of the Cuckoo, whose interest lies in a different walk.

Wordsworth's Ode goes direct to the points of fascination—the association with Spring, the mysterious concealment, and the peculiar and remarkable note.

O blithe New-comer ! I have heard,
 I hear thee and rejoice.
 O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee bird,
 Or but a wandering voice ?

Comment on this is needless ; the last line has depicted the bird at a stroke.

While I am lying on the grass,
 Thy twofold shout I hear,
 From hill to hill it seems to pass,
 At once far off, and near.

The 'two-fold shout' does not quite come up to our idea of the singular note ; but what else can be said ? The third and fourth lines well express the baulking of our sense of distance, which adds to the mysteriousness of the bird's location.

Though babbling only, to the Vale,
 Of sunshine and of flowers,
 Thou bringest unto me a tale
 Of visionary hours.

Here the poet departs from the direct influence of the Cuckoo to its associations with his own past life ; a frequent and admissible licence. Of course many objects of nature have this effect ; but some more than others. The legitimate selection properly falls on such as are calculated to make a strong impression when first noted. Wordsworth is aware of this, as will be seen.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !
 Even yet thou art to me
 No Bird ; but an invisible Thing,
 A voice, a mystery.

An emphatic iteration of the three characteristics of the Cuckoo. The full justification of the previous stanza is given in what follows :—

The same whom in my School-boy days
 I listened to ; that Cry
 Which made me look a thousand ways
 In bush, and tree, and sky.
 To seek thee did I often rove
 Through woods and on the green ;
 And thou wert still a hope, a love ;
 Still longed for, never seen.

The justification is now complete. The Cuckoo is not merely one of a hundred things equally associated with the poet's early years, and all equally quotable as a means of recalling youthful scenes and emotions ; it is (unless there be purposed exaggeration) one special and pre-eminent object ; it took hold of him by an overpowering fascination, and kept him in a protracted chase.

And I can listen to thee yet ;
 Can lie upon the plain
 And listen, till I do beget
 That golden time again.

An expansion of the theme, with renewed and admissible emphasis. The last stanza is a climax.

O blessed Bird ! the earth we pace
 Again appears to be
 An unsubstantial, faery place ;
 That is fit home for Thee !

This appears again to draw upon the visionary stage of youth, and to clench the efficacy of the cuckoo to evoke that stage in all its original richness.

By way of an illustrative contrast to Wordsworth, let us glance at Logan's Ode, which was admired by Burke, and is celebrated by Campbell.

Hail, beauteous stranger of the grove !
 Thou messenger of Spring !
 Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
 And woods thy welcome sing.

The epithet 'beauteous' sets aside at once the mystery ; and we have nothing but the connection with Spring, which is common to a great many things. The circumstance in the third line contributes a pleasing picture of the hospitable reception of a welcome stranger.

What time the daisy decks the green,
 Thy certain voice we hear ;
 Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
 Or mark the rolling year ?

The bird's punctuality could not be more finely rendered.

Delightful visitant ! with thee
I hail the time of flowers,
And hear the sound of music sweet
From birds among the bowers.

These are simply the delights of the spring, of which the cuckoo is the harbinger : itself not apparently counting as one of the musical birds among the bowers.

The schoolboy, wandering through the wood,
To pull the primrose gay,
Starts, the new voice of Spring to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

A great tribute to the bird in one of its intrinsic peculiarities. That wayward personage, the schoolboy, is arrested by the strange note, and pays it the compliment of imitation.

What time the pea puts on the bloom,
Thou fliest the vocal vale,
An annual guest in other lands,
Another Spring to hail.

This is to make the most of the cuckoo's impatience under the approach of cold ; a circumstance scarcely amounting to poetry. The theme is continued :—

Sweet bird, thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear ;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year.

And the poet concludes—

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee !
We'd make, with joyful wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the spring.

It will be seen that Logan neglects the really intrinsic features of the cuckoo—the mysterious concealment and the note ; the solitary exception being the passing effect on the schoolboy. He makes use simply of the accidental, and not at all distinctive, association with Spring : and composes several

elegant stanzas pertaining to that season. In order to carry out his own desire of an eternal Spring, which would be no spring at all, he misrepresents the migration of the bird ; the motive consisting simply in the search for a warm latitude.*

Another interesting parallel might be drawn between Shelley's Lark and Keats's Nightingale. We might, I think, show that in poetic force and richness, Keats even surpasses Shelley, while dealing less in exaggeration. The happiness of the bird is not over-done in the same glaring style ; there is an absence of unsuitable and highly wrought comparisons. It is made to take part in a number of imaginative situations, to all which it lends a harmonizing accompaniment. The few comparisons employed are more in keeping, by being drawn from music—"thy high requiem," "the plaintive anthem". The length of the stanzas makes a material difference to the poem ; the greater scope for accumulated imagery is at once a facility and a difficulty : yet, for sustained harmony, the poetry of all ages might be searched in vain to surpass the second stanza. The poetical handling of music will come up in a subsequent lesson.

Our next example is from Gray. His scanty collection of poems is one of the treasures of the English language ; and furnishes examples of poetic style adapted as well for teaching as for solitary perusal. The judicious instructor will take to pieces a stanza here and there without detracting from the pleasure of the whole. The prevailing qualities of Gray's composition are prominent, and agreed upon by critics.

I will take, as the subject of the lesson, the *Ode on the Pleasures arising from Vicissitude*, which he left unfinished.

Now the golden morn aloft
 Waves her dew-bespangled wing ;
 With vermeil-cheek and 'whispers soft
 She woos the tardy spring:

* Both poets overlook the unamiable or selfish side of the cuckoo, its laying its eggs in the nests of other birds.

A valuable discipline might be imparted in connection with Gray's Order of words, which is sometimes, but not always, the best for clearness and grace. In the clause made up of the two first lines, a more modern poet would probably introduce greater inversion. The present order is not the best for either prose or poetry. A thorough inversion would be highly poetical. "Now aloft her dew-bespangled wings waves the golden morn:" this would, of course, need modification for the metre; but it represents the more typical arrangement in poetic style. The two concluding lines are better in point of arrangement; the last might be inverted—"the tardy spring she woos". The use of 'vermeil' for the commoner term 'vermilion' has a certain poetic effect.

The personification of morn is finely sustained—condensed, yet clear and harmonious. The description is sufficiently prolonged to make a good impression; the picture of wooing introduces the element of tenderness with supporting adjuncts. The compression of Gray is very remarkable; achieved, as it is, with so little obscurity and with imagery so choice, and in such perfect keeping. All this we can set before our pupils as an ideal of perfection; to reproduce it in a new composition would demand a portion of the author's genius and labour.

Till April starts, and calls around
The sleeping fragrance from the ground;
And lightly o'er the living scene
Scatters his freshest, tenderest green.

Here any one may practise variations of order. Releasing ourselves from the necessities of metre, with a view to our experiment, we might transpose thus:—"Till April starts, and around him from the ground calls the sleeping fragrance; and, lightly o'er the living scene, his freshest, tenderest green he scatters". This is a more complete departure from the prose form, and more nearly what our poets now-a-days make it;

while the position of the circumstances is such as to favour the cumulative effect.

As the lines stand, it may be remarked, that the rhymes are perhaps too emphatic, and not placed upon the words that have a corresponding emphasis in the sense. A good reader would have to reduce greatly the stress of the voice on "around," and "ground"; and although "scene" and "green" are important substantives, yet their accompanying adjectives are equally important, and in prose would be read with quite as much emphasis.

Once for all, attention may be called to Gray's repeated use of the co-ordinating adjectives as a means of condensation. The usage is very marked with him: "sleeping fragrance," "living scene," "tardy spring," "golden morn,"—do not exhaust the cases in the eight lines we have quoted. Every one of these phrases is the co-ordinating clause, equivalent to a "fragrance that is sleeping," etc.; quite a different thing from the ordinary use of the adjective as qualifying or limiting the substantive—"much or little fragrance". Now, condensing devices may be overdone, especially in poetry, which should be readable without effort; and it is not risking much to say, that there are too many of these co-ordinating adjectives in one stanza.

New-born flocks, in rustic dance,
Frisking ply their feeble feet;
Forgetful of their wintry trance,
The birds his presence greet:

The personification of April is kept up; but we are not made aware of the fact till the concluding line. The order is still open to criticism; or at all events to experimental variation. The order of the first two lines is prose; the lines might be advantageously transposed: "frisking ply their feeble feet, in rustic dance the new-born flocks". This would balance with the other two, and obviate the disposition that we have, from the present order, to apply the third line—"forgetful ——," to the

flocks. The last line might be shaped so as to make the inversion thorough-going—"his presence greet the birds". It seems to have been Gray's theory of inversions or departures from prose arrangement, that they have no intrinsic suitability to poetry, but are simply to be used for the sake of change. There is only one co-ordinating adjective in these lines, "feeble feet," and the stanza reads lighter in consequence. The rhyme is not too obtrusive for the sense. As usual with Gray, the choice of words is all that could be wished; giving an admirable picture, unchecked by discords of phrase. Two incidents are comprised in the four lines; yet we do not feel hurried by the transition: we can fairly take in the one before entering on the other. The second half of the stanza introduces the lark.

But chief, the sky-lark warbles high
His trembling thrilling ecstasy;
And, lessening from the dazzled sight,
Melts into air and liquid light.

This more resembles the common habit of poets in making use of the lark; and is much preferable to spinning a long desultory ode. It comes happily after the previous couplet on the bird tribe in general, being the eminent specializing instance. There is no stint of laudation; and the words are all expressive and close to the reality. First is given the note, then its effect: "trembling thrilling ecstasy" is appropriate, as well as intense. The thing is done once for all; there is no enfeeblement from iteration or variation, which could hardly be maintained at so high a pitch. The next two lines take full advantage of the upward flight of the lark, and say the most that can be said for the effect of our following and losing him as he recedes aloft: "melts into air and liquid light" is intended to add to the influence of the situation, but is of doubtful efficacy.

Rise, my soul! on wings of fire,
Rise the rapturous choir among;
Hark! 'tis nature strikes the lyre,
And leads the general song:

The bold apostrophe and the elevated phraseology of the two first lines touch the highest sublime. The energy of the cadence is at the same level. The third line is effective from the word "nature," which is at once the commonest and the sublimest of terms. When so used as to suggest the collective universe, it has its greatest power; and the present combination "strikes the lyre" is grand in itself and little hackneyed. The concluding line is not couched in ambitious figures, and yet its simplicity is agreeable; the bare action is grand and effective without elaboration or adornment.

' Warm let the lyric transport flow,
 Warm as the ray that bids it glow,
 And animates the vernal grove
 With health, with harmony, and love.'

We miss here the lucidity of the previous stanzas. (The lines are Mason's.) The first line is plain enough; the second is not so plain—"warm as the *ray* that bids it glow". We discover, no doubt, that by the "ray" is meant the sun's radiance, but this is not apparent at first; and the defect in the suggestive force of the word is all the greater that it has to sustain the action of the two last lines. As in previous stanzas, the order seems too prosaic for the elevation of the strain. In the first line, we might have a more complete inversion—"Warm let flow the lyric transport"; and the third and fourth lines could be transposed with advantage. It would probably be still better if the whole arrangement were re-cast; the three last lines preceding, and the first reserved for the climax of the action.

These three eight-line stanzas are a preparation for the poet's theme—namely, vicissitude. The next stanza introduces it expressly, although still clothed in poetic circumstances.

Yesterday the sullen year
 Saw the snowy whirlwind fly;
 Mute was the music of the air,
 The herd stood drooping by:

The two first lines are in the only lucid arrangement. There might be a slight change in the second, but for the danger of ambiguity: "The snowy whirlwind *saw* fly". The third line is the typical inversion preferred by poetry when the adjective is the predicate of a clause. The fourth line would have been more emphatic, if it had balanced with the third, and ended with "herd"; but the inversion, "stood by the drooping herd," where a verb comes first without an adverb is somewhat of a licence, although not unknown to poetic diction. The climax might have been improved by putting the third line last; the subject has more energy, and the metre is more sounding. Rhetorical illustrations might be given from the choice expressions "sullen year" and "snowy whirlwind".

Their raptures now that wildly flow,
No yesterday nor morrow know;
'Tis man alone that joy descries
With forward and reverted eyes.

The poetic style is here in abeyance; the attempt is to embody a doctrinal statement in the compression of metre, after the manner of Pope. The difficulties of the attempt are great; and our exhibition of the weak points is intended for instruction, and not for depreciation. Perhaps for "their" we might have "*the* raptures now," etc. In the second line, Pope would have said—"Nor yesterday nor morrow know". In the third line, "'Tis man alone that joy descries," there is a taking for granted that the previous four lines put forward a representative selection of the lower animals, which is a little more than we were prepared for. The expression "joy *descries*" hardly meets the case: it is not the parallel of the position in previous lines, with reference to the animals; they are actually happy, and form no ideas of their happiness or misery yesterday or to-morrow: man, when happy, or the reverse, takes the past and the future also into the account. It cannot be said that the poet is felicitous in the concluding line—"with forward and

reverted eyes". For "reverted" we might suggest "backward," for the sake of the more intelligible contrast; but this would not give his idea of "back-turned".

The lines furnish a good case for a prose paraphrase. There is no poetic diction to mangle or destroy; and an entirely new expression would have to be found, so as to give the thought with due explicitness, such as we look for in setting forth a doctrine possessing importance on its own account, and not depending for its interest on poetic adornment. But of this, more afterwards.

Smiles on past misfortune's brow
Soft reflection's hand can trace;
And o'er the cheek of sorrow throw
A melancholy grace;

Gray usually prefers variation of order to the clearness of the parallel or balanced construction. The first couplet is a good poetical inversion. To balance it, the second should have been cast differently. If we had the licence of prose we could put it as a participial adjunct, thus:—"casting a melancholy grace o'er the cheek of sorrow". The use of the possessive in words that are not names of persons is a poetic licence, and aids in compression; but should not be frequent.

While hope prolongs our happier hour,
Or deepest shades, that dimly lower
And blacken round our weary way,
Gilds with a gleam of distant day.

It seems captious to be continually quarrelling with the order of words in so consummate a poet, yet we cannot here refrain from suggesting the transposition of the fourth line to the place of the second:—

While hope prolongs our happier hour,
And gilds with gleams of distant day
Those deepest shades that dimly lower
And blacken round our weary way.

The poet is now engaged in bringing forward examples of

his theme of *Vicissitude*. So far he is very general, while embodying his generalities in poetic diction, which is, as usual, select and terse, even when not very original. He goes on—

Still, where rosy pleasure leads,
See a kindred grief pursue ;
Behind the steps that misery treads,
Approaching comfort view:

The order here is in every way good ; the two couplets are suitably balanced, and gain in clearness thereby. The remark is somewhat hypercritical, yet relevant, that in passing from pleasure followed by grief to the obverse instance of misery followed by comfort, there should be a suitable conjunction, as “while”. In prose, this could not be dispensed with. In the absence of such a word, we read the second couplet as merely a various rendering of the idea in the first, until we come to “misery,” which corrects us.

The hues of bliss more brightly glow,
Chastised by sabler tints of woe ;
And blended form, with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.

This comes in awkwardly as an expansion of the thought of the first couplet of the previous quotation. The second or obverse couplet should be considered as having closed that subject : but here it is re-opened for a new treatment over four lines. Nor can we commend the new arrangement as we did the previous one. The poet himself gives us numerous precedents for such an order of the first two lines as this—

Chastised by sabler tints of woe,
More brightly glow the hues of bliss.

The two last read perfectly well after this transposition (assuming the rhyme to be adjusted). Another arrangement of the second line is possible, if not preferable, putting aside metre—

By sabler tints of woe chastised.

We begin now to feel rather an excess of wordiness in the

addition of these four lines. The previous twelve would have sufficed for iterating the poet's idea in the general form. This next stanza brings before us a more specific example.

See the wretch, that long has tost
 On the thorny bed of pain,
 At length repair his vigour lost,
 And breathe and walk again :

The effect of these lines is sharp and decisive. The order might be theoretically more perfect, according to prevailing poetic usage, could it run—"See the wretch that on pain's thorny bed long has tost"; yet the change is unnecessary in the view of ready apprehension of the sense. It may be doubted whether the word "wretch" is admissible as the name for one that is a sufferer merely, and in no respect a vile person. (The remark would not apply to the adjective "wretched".) The concluding line is good in sound, but does not so well correspond in meaning to the relief from the "thorny bed of pain," as the third line, and even that is not an exact reverse. To suit the mode of expressing the recovery, the illness should have been given more in the form of extreme lassitude, depression, and stagnation of vitality. Such at least would be the demands made upon a prose writer, in handling the situation.

The meanest floweret of the vale,
 The simplest note that swells the gale,
 The common sun, the air, the skies,
 To him are opening paradise.

We have here, as regards the diction, a simple poetic selection of circumstances, without elevating comparisons or figures of any importance. The drift of the lines would have been sooner seized, if the poet could have commenced with "to him". Indeed, the last line could very well have been first, and the third second; for, although the third contains large objects, fitting a climax, on account of their largeness, yet it is well

understood that specification of interesting examples of a class stated generally, also forms an effective close.

Humble Quiet builds her cell,
Near the source whence pleasure flows ;
She eyes the clear crystalline well,
And tastes it as it goes.

We are now introduced to a contrast between two classes of men—the quiet and sober-minded, on the one hand, and the madly ambitious, on the other. Postponing our reflections on the thought of the Ode, we here remark simply on the diction and order ; and little need be said on either, after the criticisms passed on previous stanzas. The order is remarkably simple : there is no inversion ; and nothing would be gained by inversion. It does not answer to throw the subject of a sentence to the end, when the sentence is more expository than poetical, and when it contains in itself the entire exposition. The circumstances are all in fine keeping, else the verse would not be Gray's ; the humility of Quiet is shown by her simple residence—a cell.

While far below the madding crowd
Rush headlong to the dangerous flood,
Where broad and turbulent it sweeps,
And perish in the boundless deeps.*

The energy of the language and of the metre corresponds to the subject, and enhances the sweet and tranquil flow of the previous lines. We have here the contrast introduced by the conjunction desiderated in a previous stanza. The only thing wanting would be to bring "the madding crowd" up at once as the subject to balance "Quiet" ; but anything like a close parallelism of circumstances and arrangement is scarcely attainable in poetry, and is seldom sought in the poetic embodiment of contrasts. The "And" at the beginning of the fourth line, is Mason's conjectural filling up of a gap in the unfinished

* Part of this stanza, with most of the remainder, is Mason's.

stanza : " And so " would have been necessary to complete the meaning, which the single conjunction scarcely gives.

Mark where Indolence and Pride,
Soothed by flattery's tinkling sound,
Go, softly rolling, side by side,
Their dull but daily round:

The poet's habit of compression is here aided by personifying abstract qualities. There is nothing specially remarkable in the diction ; and the details are not less felicitous than usual. The language seems more suited to Indolence than to Pride ; and although these qualities may be coupled in fact, yet Pride is supposed to carry with it a certain amount of energy, and is not commonly joined with dulness. The poet's moralizing tendency sometimes leads him into feeble platitudes. The next four lines, by Mason, supply the contrast.

To these, if Hebe's self should bring
The purest cup from pleasure's spring,
Say, can they taste the flavour high
Of sober, simple, genuine joy ?

We can now adduce the poet's own authority for a previous suggestion (stanza last but one). The intended contrast is made plain by the opening words, " To these " ; and the grammar throughout aids lucidity. We have had already the tasting of pleasure's spring, and could now dispense with it. There is a slight incongruity between " flavour high," and " sober, simple, genuine joy " ; joy is not sober and simple, if it can also be described as high-flavoured. Mason next gives us a touch of his own genius for the sublime.

Mark Ambition's march sublime
Up to power's meridian height ;
While pale-eyed Envy sees him climb,
And sickens at the sight.
Phantoms of danger, death, and dread,
Float hourly round Ambition's head ;
While spleen, within his rival's breast,
Sits brooding on her scorpion nest.

There is a tragic grandeur here, showing us how well sublimity starts from indignation and invective. The fifth and sixth lines might be transposed, with advantage to clearness—

Around Ambition's head there float
Phantoms of danger, death, and dread.

The seventh would then admit of a change of order, beginning—

While, within his rival's breast.

The imagery in detail is scathing and fully sustained.

Happier he, the peasant, far,
From the pangs of passion free,
That breathes the keen yet wholesome air
Of rugged penury.
He, when his morning task is done,
Can slumber in the noontide sun ;
And hie him home, at evening's close,
To sweet repast and calm repose.

The intended contrast is decidedly announced by the commencing words—"Happier he". The relative in the beginning of the third line is at an unpleasant distance from the antecedent. Also, "far" occupies a position that disturbs the sense; say, "far happier he". Some doubts may be expressed as to the suitability of the conjunction—"breathing the *air* of *penury*". A variation might be tried in lines five and six :—

He, when done his morning task,
In the noontide sun can slumber.

So the seventh—

At evening's close can hie him home.

The Ode ends thus :—

He, unconscious whence the bliss,
Feels, and owns in carols rude,
That all the circling joys are his
Of dear Vicissitude.
From toil he wins his spirits light,
From busy day the peaceful night ;
Rich, from the very want of wealth,
In heaven's best treasures, peace and health.

There is no poetic elevation here ; only compact versification. The words are well chosen for terseness, and the sense is perfectly clear. The first line needs a slight, and only a slight, effort to catch the meaning, owing to the brevity. The "whence" is made to do duty for relative, adverb, and verb together—"whence arises or flows". Lines three and four are admirably managed for the climax in *Vicissitude*: the slight transposition of "his" would make the order perfect—

That *his* are all the circling joys.

The fifth line might be arranged thus—

From toil, his spirits light he wins.

The seventh line is a pungent epigram ; after which the effect of the eighth is rather to dilute than otherwise.

So far, we have made, from the Ode, a lesson of diction, having dwelt in the first instance upon the order of the words, and next upon the harmony or keeping of the wonderfully choice language. We have also adverted to the arts employed to promote the prevailing feature of compression or brevity. For all these purposes, the detailed examination is useful. We could of course review the figures employed, and frame a lesson out of them ; but this has been forborne in order to make an exercise out of the qualities that the Ode most prominently embodies.

We ought not to quit the consideration of the poem, without remarking upon the thoughts, or the subject-matter. A poem usually has a subject ; the poetry, however, consisting mainly in the treatment or language. Sometimes, the poet shows an evident wish to attach importance to the thoughts as such ; and regards his work as a complex effect—partly of exposition, partly of decoration. Such is manifestly the case here ; the Ode is an exposition of a vast and important theme—the influence, in human life, of change, alternation, or vicissitude.

So important is the topic, that we should be interested by an exposition of it in the plainest prose. From this circumstance, there might be a useful lesson of legitimate paraphrase: namely, to withdraw the subject entirely from the poetic form, and to clothe it in the garb of pure prose. This is very different from turning into prose the poet's own language, by a process of degradation and mangling. The whole arrangement, as well as the diction, of the poem would be departed from. The free licence of prose would be used to supply omissions, to redress exaggerations, to introduce qualifying circumstances, and to give examples suitable for exposition, though not for poetry. The paraphraser declines to run a race with the poet, in the treatment, but outrivals him in the strictly expository merits; with this exception, no doubt, that, whatever aspect of the truth the poet conveys, he impresses it more indelibly and more agreeably.

The topic chosen by the poet is a very tempting one. It lends itself not merely to interesting exposition, but also to energetic moral suasion. In the hands of preachers and poets, of all ages, it has been a grand instrumentality in the attempt to redress the ills of life, by helping either to explain them away, or to apply a remedy. The ills that we must endure are regarded as preparing us for our greatest pleasures, inasmuch as these arise in the rebound from previous pains.

Gray's treatment of the whole subject in the present Ode must be pronounced very imperfect, and full of mistakes, which he coins into special pleadings. The three first stanzas are pure and admirable poetry; the remainder of the poem grows more and more expository, and less poetical. Generally speaking, he confounds two very different ideas; the alternation of states all pleasant in themselves—as healthy exercise and rest, excitement and quiet, society and solitude,—and the alternation of good and evil, which is no blessing at all. Very few of our pains are compensated for by the satisfaction that relief

brings. The phrase "dear Vicissitude" is a misnomer. Vicissitude means the alternation of prosperity and adversity: there is nothing dear in that, however salutary as moral discipline.

The poet does not confine himself to the subject of Vicissitude or Alternation, in either of its two aspects. In his haste to moralize, and to correct the vicious and mistaken judgments of mankind, he introduces a third subject, the happiness of a humble lot, in contrast to the folly of ambition. This is quite a distinct line of reflection; it has nothing in common with the blessings of Vicissitude. To apply these to the new case, there should have been a recommendation to the ambitious and aspiring man to change places for a time, and only for a time, with the humble and contented; by doing so, he would re-enter on his ambitious career with new zest.

LESSON III.

THE examples in the present lesson will be devoted mainly to the sublime of natural scenery. The conditions of success in this effect will be to some extent illustrated.

The emotions of Sublimity, or the highest form of strength, have been referred, in a former lesson, to the fundamental feelings of Maleficent and Beneficent Power. It may now be added, that Personation is more or less implicated in the effect. Our strongest emotions refer to persons; and the occasions of their strongest manifestations are in the encounter with actual persons. Love, admiration, anger, hatred, contempt, are drawn forth in their utmost degree, by some one or more individuals in personal relation to ourselves. Even our sensuous pleasures or pains are most strongly brought out by the sensible qualities of living beings.

Poetry, or emotional composition in general, must fail to rival in effect the presence of the living beings that actually surround us; no description of any object whatever can equal the reality.

But poetical, or other, description has resources and arts that help to compensate for its deficiency in the power of making us feel an absent thing as if it were present. There is not any art that can give the impression of the Parthenon, of St. Peter's, or of Mount Etna in volcanic activity; but there are resources, both in poetry and in painting, for arousing in us very vivid emotions in connection with all of them.

In our feelings and pictures of Personality, there is this peculiar circumstance, namely, that the smallest, the most limited, resemblance to a person can rouse the personal emotion, so far as that feature goes. We do not need a completed personality in order to be reminded of our relationship to persons. A picture comes very far short of a living man or woman, and yet it can stir up in us a considerable force of the personal emotions. So can a statue, which has its peculiar advantages and disadvantages as compared with a picture. Both are inferior to reality; but both may do something to make up for their inferiority,—that something being the triumph of art. By giving increased prominence to some salient and leading peculiarity, perhaps the one that gives the original its chief interest, by subduing the uninteresting or unimportant features, an artist can make us take more interest in a mere picture than we do in an original. Even when we are looking at an actual man, or woman, or animated object, we are not necessarily occupied alike with all the parts; some one feature engrosses our attention; and if, in a good imitation, this feature is improved upon, we may prefer the work of art to the actuality.

So penetrating is our sense of Personality, that we are laid hold of by any single circumstance of resemblance, even in things that have nothing else in common with an actual person. The chance outline of a mountain may resemble a human face; we take a personal interest in the resemblance; while the gigantic mould and proportions elevate our conceptions, in the way that we feel when contemplating a giant. Anything that

manifests great power—as a rushing stream, a tempest, or a steam-engine—makes us agreeably alive with the sympathy of power, as if it were a personality like ourselves, and yet there is wanting every thing else that makes up personality.

On the foundation, thus briefly sketched, nature-interest first arises; while the painter and the poet build upon it without end. The conditions of their success are to be judged by the study of examples.

Our present lesson will start with Coleridge's "Mont Blanc".

Hast thou a charm to stay the morning star
In his steep course? So long he seems to pause
On thy bold awful head, O sovran Blanc!

The Apostrophe and Interrogation are finely employed as the setting of the lofty phraseology. The ingenious thought intended to insinuate the vastness and potency of the mountain is what we can tolerate; the morning star is arrested in his rise by proximity to the summit. This little fiction is expressed in agreeable terms, but without strain or elevation; so that we are prepared for the highly-pitched language of the third line: "*thy bald awful head*"—a fine combination; the one epithet giving picturesque description, and the other emotional force. There is still room left for the third epithet "sovran," at once appropriate and effective. As an introduction, we can conceive nothing finer than these lines. The melody is in full keeping with the phraseology.

The Arve and Arveiron at thy base
Rave ceaselessly; but thou, most awful form!
Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines,
How silently!

For a great effect, Contrast is felt to be indispensable, or, at least, an important aid. Yet the management of a contrast needs delicacy; we must not make the contrasting picture

intrinsically disagreeable, while heightening the main subject ; and we must be sure that it really adds to the effect. Coleridge is bent now upon setting forth the majesty of silence, with its associations of dignity, awe, and solemnity ; and he looks about for a contrasting noise that shall be free from indignity or vulgarity. He finds this in the two great glacier streams, which are the appendage of the mountain, and belong, therefore, to its full delineation. They are vehement, noisy, restless ; yet the vivacious energy of a running stream makes an object of nature-interest, through a dim but felt personification ; and it is one of the standing constituents of nature poetry. The poet gives it the touch of ideality in his epithet "rave". "Rage" is hackneyed to weakness ; "rave" fairly meets the situation. It is not a pleasant idea when applied in its original signification to a human being bereft of sober senses ; but we learn to surmount the unpleasantness in the metaphorical application to insentient nature : we thus receive it, as it is meant, to suggest force or vehemence, which has an animating and elevating effect by the law of sympathy extended to the physical world.

Now comes the contrast. We have first the repetition of the term "awful," which belongs to the sublime in its most efficacious form of destructive possibility ; the extreme harshness of this idea being toned down by usage, but the essential part remaining. Next comes the fine, and yet simple line—"Risest from forth thy silent sea of pines". Still-life form is made more impressive by action, although fictitious. The mountain is made as it were to *rise up* to its great elevation. The "sea of pines" is a powerful delineation of the grandeur of the forests at its base : the epithet "silent" is a fine personification of quiet. The idea of "silence" is repeated in a brief closing exclamation—"how silently" ; an idea that is also awe-inspiring ; some of the most powerful of Nature's forces being silent in their operation.

This is all that the poet thinks proper to make of the mountain itself as a visible object. He selects three impressive circumstances and no more. He might have given the reader further assistance in the way of conceiving the actual mountain; in this respect, however, poets have a wide latitude. They attempt too much if they endeavour to play the part of the descriptive geographer, or picturesque tourist, and to give a reader of lively imagination the full conception of a complicated scene. Yet they are often successful in seizing leading features with such power as to contribute greatly towards making an absent object vividly present. Whether Coleridge might not have made something more out of the surroundings of the mountain, we do not venture to judge; as it stands, the reader would need to have seen the original to be fully affected by the beauty of the description.

The next lines present a new aspect.

Around thee and above,
Deep is the air and dark, substantial, black,
An ebon mass : methinks thou piercest it,
As with a wedge !

We can remark here upon the very perfect arrangement of the words, showing none of Gray's vacillation. We might try any number of variations, but we could not improve upon the present order. "Around thee and above" comes first in the presentation of the picture, although in grammatical prose order, it would be last or nearly so. The inversion "deep is the air" goes as far as it ought, and no further. It would not be an improvement to make the whole series of adjectives precede the substantive "air". These adjectives are cumulative, and run to a height in "black," while the "ebon mass" makes the climax. The towering height of the mountain is rendered impressive by the powerful delineation of the altered atmosphere depending on height. Every word tells: "deep" is appropriate to the rarity of the air, making it, as it were, more penetrable;

in such a connection, it has the touch of sublimity of space ; the darkness, substantiality, and blackness, present a different aspect, the absence of clouds and light reflection,—also an incident of great elevation. It requires some experience of the lofty heights of the atmosphere, to feel the effect intended. The solidity is still further enhanced by the closing circumstance “ thou piercest it as with a wedge ”. Everything is done to put us in an entirely new atmospheric situation, so as to suggest the more effectually the far-reaching elevation of the mountain summit. The poet must intend, however, that we should conceive the air, as it would appear, if we were actually on the top ; for looking up from beneath, we should fail to recognize it. The whole idea is intrinsically grand, but wants to be reflected on ; which is not what is usual, or indeed advisable, in poetry.

But when I look again,
It is thine own calm home, thy crystal shrine,
Thy habitation from eternity !

Once more we change the point of view. The impenetrable depth of the air is now converted into the home, the residence, of the mountain—a pathetic circumstance that softens the stiff grandeur of the previous situation. The addition of “ thy crystal shrine ” no doubt adds to the poetry, by the combination of brilliancy and sacredness ; but it strains our imagination to make it unite with the depth and blackness, already depicted. The addition of “ eternity ” raises the sublimity to the utmost ; but the want of truth (on every theory of the universe), if reflected on, is disenchanting.

O dread and silent mount ! I gazed upon thee,
Till thou, still present to the bodily sense,
Didst vanish from my thought ; entranced in prayer
I worshipped the invisible alone.

The poet delights in iterating the circumstance of silence and calmness : the sublimity of the picture reposes upon energy in reserve ; self-contained majesty, realizing the ancient

philosophers' conception of the pagan gods. Without might, in some shape or other, nothing could be sublime: certainly, "dread" supposes power; and the obvious way of manifesting it is by action,—as in the ocean, the waterfall, or the tempest. When we are sated with the tumultuous displays of power, we can recur with satisfaction to the quiescent attitude, although we must still suppose the existence of the force. In a mountain, we can well imagine the energy of upheaval, and also the crushing pressure upon the ground beneath; but these are not brought out by the poet, except in his phrase—"risest from forth thy silent sea of pines"; no accompanying might is suggested in the rising.

The final circumstance is the religious turn given to the contemplation of the mountain. The thought is pantheistic: that is, the Invisible God is somehow imagined as a transformation or equivalent of the scene; not as the maker or creator of it. The propriety and effects of this vein of reflection cannot be judged by the same laws of criticism as the rest.

We have the great advantage of comparing Coleridge with Shelley on the same subject. The "Lines written in the Vale of Chamouni" make a poem of six pages, in Shelley's usual style of diffuse and gorgeous illustration. Luckily, there is one short passage that we can bring into comparison with the Coleridge passage.

Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
 Mont Blanc appears,—still, snowy, and serene.
 Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
 Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
 Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
 Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
 And wind among the accumulated steeps;
 A desert peopled by the storms alone,
 Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
 And the wolf tracks her there. How hideously
 Its shapes are heaped around—rude, bare, and high,
 Ghastly, and scarred, and riven.

The far-rising top, piercing the sky, is given as in the other. The silence is less emphatically expressed, and the awe or dread is absent. The baldness is replaced by the less effective epithet "snowy". Instead of the rising from the pines, the poet chooses a circumstance equally impressive, and even more picturesque—the surrounding of the subject-mountains with their unearthly forms of ice and rock. Perhaps Coleridge would not have omitted so striking a feature, if he had not been anticipated. Implicated with these forms, and filling up the picture, are the vales where the glaciers descend—"frozen floods, unfathomable deeps, blue as the overhanging heaven". This aspect is grandly filled up with suitable circumstances, in good proportion, and without those serious digressions or distractions, which so often mar the coherence of Shelley's descriptions. We can, without losing our thread, afford the little incident of the eagle and the wolf, lending force, as it does, to the grim desert. The reflections that follow the above are less satisfactory. There is a mixture of strong language with moralizing,—in which neither comes out so plain and straight as we could desire.

Is this the scene

Where the old Earthquake-demon taught her young
 Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
 Of fire envelope once this silent snow?
 None can reply—all seems eternal now.
 The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
 So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
 But for such faith, with nature reconciled.
 Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
 Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

The first interrogation—"Is this the scene where the old Earthquake-demon taught ruin to her young?"—is a grand similitude worthy of the poet. The next theory put as a

question—"Did a sea of fire envelope once this silent snow?"—divides our attention: we do not know whether to take it as a scientific hypothesis, or to view it as poetry; it does not rank high in either case. The remark "all seems eternal now" is juster than Coleridge's past eternity. The concluding scepticism is too hasty; and is not atoned for by the poetry. Such sweeping conclusions are not to be drawn poetically.

It is instructive further to compare with the foregoing passages Byron's stanza—

Above me are the Alps,
 The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
 Have pinnaced in clouds their snowy scalps,
 And throned Eternity in icy halls
 Of cold sublimity, where forms and falls
 The Avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow.
 All that expands the spirit yet appals,
 Gather around these summits, as to show
 How Earth may pierce to Heaven,
 Yet leave vain man below.

Everything is done here in the way of selection of figures and circumstances of the utmost sublimity. If there be a want, it is the one so difficult to make good in descriptive poetry—the orderly coherence of the whole.

This lesson may end with an example of the licence of personification, taken from a different subject, namely, personality in the actual, but carried beyond human limits. There is gained here also the advantage of rising far above our own familiar selves, and seeing the qualities that we delight in contemplating raised to preternatural dimensions. The mind can be satisfied, pleased, and elated, by a grand stroke of power, with yet a very dim conception of the powerful personality in its other features. Upon this specialty of our imagination, Milton has reared the structure of the *Paradise Lost*; in which he follows innumerable precedents in the poetry of the mytho-

logical ages. We are quite unable to realize the complete picture of Satan, or of any of his host,—except when they are supposed, by way of disguise, to assume the literal human form; yet the gigantic scale of their actions gratifies a favourite passion—the passion for power, whether in exercise or in thought. Still, the attempt to produce this effect involves risks of failure, and it is the office of critical laws to give due warning.

Let us quote the grand passage from the First Book, where Satan rallies his fallen host.

He scarce had ceased, when the superior fiend
 Was moving toward the shore; his ponderous shield,
 Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
 Behind him cast. The broad circumference
 Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
 Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
 At evening, from the top of Fesolè,
 Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,
 Rivers, or mountains, in her spotty globe.
 His spear—to equal which the tallest pine
 Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
 Of some great ammiral, were but a wand—
 He walked with, to support uneasy steps
 Over the burning marle, not like those steps
 On heaven's azure; and the torrid clime
 Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.
 Nathless he so endured, till on the beach
 Of that inflamèd sea he stood, and called
 His legions,—angel forms, who lay entranced
 Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
 In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades
 High over-arched embower; or scattered sedge
 Afloat, when with fierce winds Orion armed
 Hath vexed the Red-sea coast, whose waves o'erthrew
 Busiris and his Memphian chivalry,
 While with perfidious hatred they pursued
 The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
 From the safe shore their floating carcasses
 And broken chariot-wheels. So thick bestrown,
 Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,
 Under amazement of their hideous change.
 He called so loud, that all the hollow deep
 Of hell resounded.

The rhetorical elements here are abundant and illustrative. The magnificent similes are so worked up with poetic circumstances and allusions as to have a value in themselves, apart from their bearing on the story. This, however, is a licence, and not to be recommended. In fact, neither the equipment of Satan, nor his action, can be steadily conceived, or made into a consistent picture. We have to be satisfied with a vague, incoherent grouping, and to derive our pleasure from the superb grandeur of the detached incidents and accompaniments,—the shield of Satan, his spear, his steps over the hot ground, which caused pain simply, but inflicted no corporal injury, the angel-host lying in countless numbers on the burning lake, and the shout of Satan to rally them. Every one of these gives occasion for a grand poetic embodiment, which stands as a beauty by itself, and not in virtue of being felicitously joined with the others.

The shield is depicted first by a series of adjectives, one—"ponderous"—preceding; the rest following—"ethereal temper, massy, large, and round". Neither the order nor the ready coherence of the whole is the best possible. The simile, however, is what makes up the picture. The broad circumference is likened to the moon, as magnified by the telescope of Galileo, whose place and occupation are set forth in detail. Such similes are so common with Milton as to be a part of his manner. Their sole justification is the pleasing aggregate of allusions, harmoniously worded. Their digressiveness and interruption to the story are treated as of no account; there being so little story to interrupt, and no cohering picture to disturb. It is scarcely possible to pourtray the personality of Satan so shielded: anything comparable to the moon could not be supposed to lie on the back of any imaginable figure. The elements employed are vast in their individuality; but we must not attempt to put them together.

The spear is also drawn by the help of a simile. Its

character is peculiar. When we can get nothing great enough to come up to our subject, we employ the device of proportionality; the tallest pine *were but a wand*. This leaves the work half done; the reader must do the rest by the strain of his own imagination.

In Satan's march over the burning marle, his uneasy steps are contrasted with "those steps on heaven's azure"; but the occasion is not suited for the contrast: we need nothing to help us to appreciate the pain of the situation.

The next great picture is the angel-host as they lie spread out on the lake. The similes are intended to help us in conceiving their numbers and density of packing. We might farther have had a stroke or two to indicate the dimensions of the scene, so as to give something like angelic proportions to the individuals; these proportions being dwarfed and concealed by the two comparisons—the leaves of Vallombrosa, and the floating sedge.

After the long and digressive comparison, where he brings in the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, he very properly recalls the original situation—

So thick bestrown,
Abject and lost, lay these, covering the flood,
Under amazement of their hideous change.

The climax here is "abject and lost," for which the concluding line is the preparatory explanation. The sublime of this passage is the prostration of a mighty host, which pleases in two ways—the sense of pain, and the satisfaction at the sight of suffering, provided it be deserved.

The concluding phrase is grand and Miltonic—

He called so loud, that all the hollow deep
Of hell resounded.

The defect, if any, is the want of an epithet to give *expansion* to the scene, as in the line—

To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.

The word "hell" does not so readily give us the sense of vast dimensions as of horror and suffering; and it was Milton's object to body it forth as a capacious locality, the scene, not simply of individual misery, but of collective and mighty prowess. The figure employed is surpassed in grandeur by the shout—

that tore hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.

LESSON IV.

IN this lesson, I will advert to one of the vexed questions of Poetry,—the presence of the element of Pain; connected with which is the quality named Pathos.

It is well understood that Poetry, like every other Fine Art, exists for heightening the pleasures and diminishing the pains of mankind. Nay, more, its object is *immediate* pleasure; it does not, like many other arts, give present pain that pleasure may come on some future day. Nevertheless, the subjects chosen by the poet are often unavoidably painful. Hereby arises a clash between the proper ends of the art and the circumstances that are inseparable from its exercise. The result is the greatest triumph of poetry—the redemption or submergence of pain. The instrumentality for this noble purpose is very various. Two points will be here adverted to.

One bears on the quality called Pathos. This is the tender feeling of our nature made use of in assuaging pains that cannot be removed or withheld from us. The tender emotions in their actual exercise are a chief source of human pleasure. They are largely made use of in poetic composition, for the delight they give. By a special provision of our nature they are stimulated by pains, and the pleasure of them may be in excess of the painful occasion; in which circumstances, gratuitous pain may be brought forward with a real advantage, while unavoidable pain is assuaged, or at all events diminished.

The pleasure of Pity is a well-known fact ; and its abuse is also known. Indeed the management of the tender emotion in this bearing is an affair of delicate consideration ; and falls within the scope of emotional criticism.

If the pleasures of the tender or loving emotion were the sole means of assuaging pain, the rule in Art would be, never to introduce pains that could not be more than submerged by the emotional power of Pathos. This is, indeed, a safe rule, and should not lightly be disregarded. Yet there are other poetic resources that may likewise answer the end. One only will be here noticed ; and it is the second of the two points intimated at starting.

The fact is unpalatable, but yet not to be slurred over, that we are so constituted as to take a positive pleasure in the infliction of suffering and also in seeing it inflicted. Only in the more savage races, and in the most debased minds among civilized men, is the feeling displayed or avowed in its nakedness. The counter-working force of pity, together with the moral education of mankind, keeps it down ; so that, when it is indulged, pretexts are usually found that seem to refer the pleasure to some other cause, such as revenge or retribution for wrong done, and precautions for our own safety. These are the usual justifications of the horrible massacres of war ; but they do not suffice to account for the entire range of our malevolent pleasures. The Greeks were not wanting in pity ; but Homer never has an expression of regret for the wholesale slaughter that he has to describe. Virgil so far differs from him as to introduce into his great poem sympathy for the fallen, illustrating the difference that eight centuries made in the humane sentiments of the two dominant races of antiquity. Modern poets must make an advance even upon Virgil to suit our professions of humanity, if not our actually realized feelings ; but it is still apparent that tales of suffering and horror can be tolerated, if not delighted in, by many, without requiring either a submerging pity, or any

of the other accompaniments that reconcile us to tragedy. The existence of such a sentiment, even so far as is usually admitted (for there is a disposition with some to explain it entirely away), perplexes the criticism of emotional effects, and especially the attempt to judge of legitimate pathos. In fact, we have before us rather a moral than an æsthetic question, when we are dealing with compositions of a highly tragical nature. At all events, it is a question of elevation and refinement of sentiment, how far we should approve of the shocking fatalities introduced by Shakespeare into "Lear," "Macbeth," "Hamlet," and "Romeo and Juliet," and by Scott into the "Bride of Lammermoor," not to mention the copious literature devoted to the exhibition of crimes and misery at large.

One other observation will introduce the present lesson. The culminating fact of human misery is Death, whether the apprehension of it in ourselves or the spectacle of it in others. All the resources of human genius have been employed in reconciling us to our inevitable doom; and not least the arts of poetry. The emotional quality of Pathos is to be viewed especially as it appears in working out this high design.

In previous lessons we have incidentally brought into notice the interest of the tender emotion generally, the cases being such as to show it in its free scope, without the burden of pain. The examples now to be given will refer to this new and distinct case, as realizing the stricter meaning of Pathos.

Readers of the "Seasons" will not forget the picture of a winter storm, in which a rustic perishes in the attempt to find his own home at nightfall. The poet's power of terse imagery is at its utmost stretch, and works up a tale of horrible circumstance. He passes to and fro between the features of the storm and the emotions of the victim; as if he wished to display the whole force of his consummate art and not to spare the reader's

sympathies by a single pang. The accumulation of circumstances is in the last degree horrible.

He meets the roughness of the middle waste,
 Far from the track, and blest abode of man ;
 While round him night resistless closes fast,
 And every tempest howling o'er his head
 Renders the savage wilderness more wild.
 Then through the busy shapes into his mind,
 Of covered pits, unfathomably deep,
 A dire descent ! beyond the power of frost ;
 Of faithless bogs ; of precipices huge,
 Smoothed up with snow ; and, what is land, unknown,
 What water, of the still unfrozen spring,
 In the loose marsh or solitary lake,
 Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.
 These check his fearful steps ; and down he sinks
 Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
 Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
 Mixed with the tender anguish nature shoots
 Through the wrung bosom of the dying man,
 His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.

We are no doubt roused to the utmost stretch of pity, but the emotional outburst furnishes no adequate consolation: the scene passes beyond the power of pity; the effect produced would be more oratorical than poetical; that is, it would inspire us with the wish to render assistance to the dying man, and, that being impossible, it gives us the sinking feeling of misery and despair. The catastrophe is embedded in the pathos of the cottage interior, where wife and children are on the stretch for the return of the hapless wanderer. We may, by courtesy, call this "pathos," because it exhibits home affection in its strongest manifestations; but, instead of abating, it increases the horrors of the situation.

In vain for him the officious wife prepares
 The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm ;
 In vain his little children, peeping out
 Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,
 With tears of artless innocence.

Here is a poetic expression of circumstances of tenderness, which we might criticize minutely ; but the most salient remark would be that the Latinized style is unfavourable to the full unction of tender feeling. In the actual situation it does little to redeem the closing tragedy :—

Alas !

Nor wife nor children more shall he behold ;
 Nor friends, nor sacred home. On every nerve
 The deadly Winter seizes ; shuts up sense ;
 And o'er his inmost vitals creeping cold,
 Lays him along the snows a stiffened corse,
 Stretched out and bleaching in the northern blast !

The elaboration of such a picture with all the arts of style does not lessen the pain of the incident ; while the so-called pathos of the domestic bereavement adds to the revulsion that a well-constituted mind feels in the recital of the story. We may indeed admire the poet's art and vigour, even although it heightens our sympathetic misery. But the question arises—Why should a poet choose such a subject at all ? The full answer would carry us into the deepest mysteries of Art ; only a part of it can be touched in the present connection.

One reason is this. The phenomena of nature and the incidents of life have been, in all ages, part of the matter of poetry. These are not necessarily interesting in themselves, but many of them become so by the poet's treatment. Now, if only the agreeable facts of the world and the agreeable incidents of life were selected, we should have an unpleasant feeling of unreality or untruthfulness, which would mar the illusion of art. Some portion of the painful side of things must be admitted in order to obviate this danger ; but the concession is not allowed further than is necessary for the purpose.

The second reason grows out of that fact of our constitution already adverted to, the fascination of suffering. As it is a part of our moral education to subdue this strange emotion, so it is a part of the poet's duty to limit the scope of its gratification.

A third reason is that the tragedy of life gives room for very high effects of style. The grandest compositions extant treat of horrible events. For the sake of those effects, we are disposed to permit such painful scenes as the foregoing to be introduced. The casualties of our lot are apt to harden us to such incidents; and a poet is not blamed when he founds upon them, provided he does not give us them too often.

These three circumstances permit exceptions to the main condition of poetry, but they do not reverse or abrogate it. Each case must be judged by itself; and the differences of men's minds interfere with absolute decisions.

We have had, in a former lesson, an example from Gray, which was made use of for a minute analysis of poetic forms and expressions. We shall now, in the present connection, make a survey of the famous *Elegy*, taking note of the topics selected by the poet with a view to soften the shock of death.

With a poem so familiar and accessible, it is unnecessary to quote in full; especially as minute criticism of the language is not the object in view. Three stanzas are introductory, and give the situation and surroundings. The first—

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day—

introduces us to the circumstances of nightfall in a spring or autumn day. The second stanza—

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight—

is a further advance into evening effects: and the third is devoted to a single circumstance, to which the poet would seem to attach special value—

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain.

Besides being an exquisite example of scenic selection and a fine embodiment of circumstances, this introduction contains a favourite thought of poets in dealing with life and death, namely,

the comparison to the phases of the day ; morning, noon, and evening representing the course of life, while night is the counterpart of death. The comparison has a perennial fitness ; it never loses its power. It aids in reconciling us to our destiny ; and poetry cannot perform a higher office. The author of the Elegy, in this view of his task, takes up his position in the shadows of evening, as the appropriate and harmonizing accompaniment ; the freshness of morning and the glare of noon would have been equally out of keeping.

The fourth stanza is the churchyard portrayed.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

This is highly picturesque ; that is to say, it seizes noted and characteristic features, and recalls the aspect of a churchyard as vividly as could be done with so few touches. The two last lines contain the human element, and in them we are to seek for the pathos of the stanza. In one line, the eternal and irrevocable doom is indicated : this is in itself humbling and depressing ; it draws forth the utmost resources of our self-pity, which, however, although a soothing and consoling influence, is much too small for the occasion. The fourth line shows that the poet's art can do no more than repeat the well-worn but congenial and comforting image of sleep. He helps it out by specializing the human relationship of "forefathers".

Two more stanzas are devoted to the mournful finality of our doom ; both working by negations. The first—

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed—

works by a selection of stirring out-of-door incidents, exhilarating to the living, although lost to the dead ; it is meant to

enhance the value of life to those of us that are still in possession. The other is the fine domestic interior, with its appeal to the tender feelings of the ideal peasant's family—

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care :
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

The next stanza is the poetic rendering of the peasant's daily avocations. It may be called the poetry of labour, the joyous side being predominant :—

How jocund did they drive their team afield ;
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke.

We have not yet forgotten the complement of this in the first stanza—

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.

These three stanzas, while seeming to deplore the privations of the dead, have the effect of increasing the interest of life to the living: and it is from this circumstance that we must derive any consolation that they can give us in the prospect of death. No doubt, in a rational view, death is mitigated by the sense of the fulness of life, while actually possessed.

Stanzas 8—11 take a new departure—

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil.

And again—

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Allowing for the fine poetical expression at every point, which we are not here considering, the question arises, what is the emotional value of the thoughts expressed? The main idea is to reprove and humiliate the great, the proud, the wealthy, by dwelling on the worthlessness of all their advantages in coping with death. This may be quite right with a view to their ad-

monition; but what does it do for the rest of us? Nothing, apparently—except to appeal to that feeling of satisfaction at seeing some of our fellow-men thrown down and mortified. We can always take a certain pleasure in this circumstance, if we are only supplied with a plausible pretext or justification, as in the present instance. While on the look-out for topics to reconcile us to our last end, we can accept such a reflection as contributing a portion of the desired solace. There is, however, nothing in it to exemplify the quality of pathos, which is understood to be the most suitable accompaniment of thoughts of death.

The stanzas that come next, 12—19, are perhaps, in point of expression, the noblest in the poem. The poet's reflections turn to the possibilities of undeveloped genius among the village host interred around where he stands. The supposition is a little stretched, from the narrowness of the area; but it is within poetical licence. The general strain of the stanzas yields two effects. One is the picturing of lofty genius in several walks, especially government and art. This eulogy of grand human qualities reaches to the highest sublime, when suitably handled. It is not the nature sublime, where simple physical power assumes inordinate dimensions; it is the sublime of humanity, which also thrills us with the exaltation of might. In Hampden and in Cromwell, the poet depicts the moral sublime, which is perhaps the most effective form of sublimity.

With these pictures of exalted humanity is mixed a species of pathos. Our pity is called into play by the want of means and opportunities for the villagers of genius; and the pathos is enhanced in its poetic force by the beautiful stanza—

Full many a gem of purest ray serene.

This is the utmost that we can expect from a poet; a situation that naturally inspires our pity, without circumstances

of tragic horror and revulsion, is heightened and adorned in its most genial aspect, by the resources of poetical comparison, and by everything that makes up the charm of language.

Another thought is raised into prominence, and finely managed. In the sublime of humanity, we may have great powers wrongly applied. Unfortunately, our minds are too apt to be more fascinated with the malign employment of great ability, than repelled by the suffering inflicted. The poet takes advantage of this, while restoring the balance morally, by the reflection that these obscure villagers were withheld from such a destiny. He then gives us (19) the fine ideal of the secluded life of the rustic.

Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

The next two stanzas exemplify real pathos in reference to the humble monuments erected to keep up the memory of the dead. Still higher in poetic flight are the two succeeding, 22, 23:

For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey.

The pathos here consists in giving poetic voice to the wail over the loss of life's interests, whatever these may be worth. It does not reconcile us to death, nor provide any kind of compensation, but, on the contrary, would seem at first sight to deepen our sense of loss. In reality, however, it has a certain value, like the outburst of tears in affliction; it gives vent to the feelings, and, by a noble embodiment, adds to the comfort afforded by the lamentation.

The remaining nine stanzas of the Elegy draw a fancy picture of the personality and fate of the supposed author of what goes before. It is a fine sketch of an eccentric genius, interesting from the simplicity of his character, humble position, melancholy temperament, and amiable virtues. This peculiar line of interest is not at present under our consideration.

Reverting to the Elegy as a whole, we should say that the pathos of death, in the form of working upon our tender emotions as a source of comfort in the sad prospect, is not what the poet actually produces. He chooses the occasion for a variety of reflections on the subject of life and death; and expends his genius on the topic of the inequality of men's conditions. We must look to other compositions for the sustained pathos of death; for example, the *In Memoriam* of Tennyson. Even in that notable poem, we have chiefly a protracted, many-toned wail, with whatever comfort may thence arise. How to bear ourselves in the view of the inevitable hour, is a question where religion, poetry, and philosophy, each come into play, and sometimes with conflicting suggestions. Tennyson expends much of his poetical strength in the conflict with scepticism, which does not enhance the poetry. Among the most genuinely poetical aids are those derived from expanding the similitudes of sleep, rest, and the cessation from trouble; from depicting the affectionate memory of survivors; from the sense of having done our work well; and from our having fairly shared with our fellow-mortals what life has to give. The wail or lament is not forbidden, but it has a tone of effeminacy, in keeping with the weaker, rather than the stronger, natures.

The difficulties in the way of pathos will come up again, before our series is finished. There needs, however, a lesson to be devoted to the emotional handling of character.

LESSON V.

ONE grand source of the agreeable interest of Poetry is the exhibition of Human Character. In Homer, this had already attained a high degree of development; and succeeding ages have added to it without limit.

It is, of course, the natural interest of human beings in each other, as shown in actual life, that forms the groundwork of this

artistic effect. The special affections and emotions of our nature are personal; and to treat of the interest of persons is merely another way of considering the interest of the social emotions, whether of amity or of enmity. Our primary concern is in the persons of our own circle, with whom we have intimate relationship—as in the family, and in the immediate surroundings of our social life. We can go beyond this, and can come under the attraction of chance individuals, by virtue of the qualities we discover in them; 'as from their being agreeable in person, in demeanour, in conduct, or otherwise. Beauty even in a stranger may arrest us; elegance of speech or deportment, stores of accumulated knowledge, the moral qualities of energy, endurance, amiability,—afford satisfaction to every beholder. So marked and powerful are the feelings thus awakened, that those who cater for our pleasures, look out for subjects possessing such attributes, and bring them vividly before us. The theatre affords one effective mode of displaying personalities of more than common interest. Not much is gained by merely repeating the displays of excellence that we have constantly about us in our own circle: some of the rarer kinds, or of the more distinguishing degrees, of the choice qualities, have to be presented for our admiration.

It is possible to give a tolerably exhaustive enumeration of all the phases of human beings that excite an agreeable feeling in beholders. In a work entitled *Sensation and Intuition*, Mr. James Sully has been very successful in such an attempt. He has considered, first, the *Æsthetic Aspects of Character*, as actually witnessed (or as described with the literality of the historian), and, next, the *Representation of Character in Art*—under which is included the selection and handling of Character in Poetry. To be thorough, an examination of the subject as wide as Mr. Sully's would be needful for a theory of literary criticism. A narrower view, however, may serve the purpose of a useful lesson in English Literature.

We must recall the observation made, in a previous Lesson (III.), on the extract from Milton, namely, that we may take considerable pleasure in a striking aspect of personality, without complete realization of the person as a whole. But for this circumstance, the great epic poems, from the Iliad downwards, would be thrown away upon us. It is very little that we can conceive of the full personality of Achilles, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Ajax, Helen, Andromache, and Penelope; yet all these Homer has so depicted, as to give them an imperishable charm. The defect in our means of realizing their full individuality, is made up by the art of the poet. The peculiarities of this artistic power—the theory of its success or failure—constitute the problem of literary criticism as regards the handling of character.

There are two ways of setting forth character with a view to poetic charm. The one is short and summary, consisting in the use of descriptive epithets, which convey the attributes that give us satisfaction. The other is more detailed: it shows us the character in action, from which we gather a still more lively impression of the qualities displayed. Both methods are used in poetic composition: both may be managed artistically, and with effect; and both may turn out failures.

The Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* is still one of our finest galleries of portraits wrought by descriptive touches. Both the physical and the mental peculiarities of the different personages are pencilled by strictly poetical devices. I will take for illustration and criticism the Clerk or Scholar.

Before descanting on the high poetical excellence of this portrait of character, some remarks may be made on its more formal peculiarities.

The features selected by the poet are chiefly these:—(1) the poverty and low physical condition of the clerk; (2) the voluntary self-denial under the overmastering passion for

study; (3) the noble and scholarly bearing as shown in his conversation.

The poet presents these three features in succession, as undoubtedly ought to be done: poetical handling does not dispense with such a methodical arrangement of topics as forms a help to the understanding. Now, a minute criticism discloses a few dislocations, which put in a stronger light the general adherence to the plan. Certainly, in any personal description containing at once physical and mental traits, the physical should come first, and be completely given before entering on the mental. Of these last, the intellectual usually precede the moral, but there may be good reasons for the inversion of that order. In the present example, lines 3, 4, 5, 6 are devoted to the bodily appearance of the scholar: the poet curiously begins with the horse, which he poetizes by one of his happy and expressive similitudes. He passes next to the rider, who is described by selected circumstances all expressive of poverty and an inferior condition physically.

The second feature—the passion for study—is expanded through thirteen lines—7 to 19. We must, however, revert to line 2, as belonging also to the same part.

That unto *logik* haddè long ygo.

This would be objectionable in placing, but for the commendable wish of the poet to begin with an epithet that sets forth the man at a stroke. It is open to the hypercritical objection, that "*logik*" is not an all-embracing name, even according to the state of knowledge at the time, and is inconsistent with what follows—the twenty books of Aristotle and his philosophy. In fact, the really comprehensive word would have been, not *logik*, but "*Aristotle*".

As to the management of the consecutive description from 7 to 19, we remark, first, the explanation of the scholar's poverty in 7 and 8; namely, his having no benefice, for want

of worldly pushing. These two lines might be inverted—the unworldliness coming first, as the cause, and the want of office second, as the effect. The next line, 9, begins the graphic description of his small library, showing his studious taste, as against the taste for dress or for music. The name “philosophy,” however, leads to a repetition of his poverty, being a sort of dislocation; it is accounted for by the irresistible transition in Chaucer’s mind from philosophy to alchemy, which was the search for the philosopher’s stone. One digression, or dislocation, usually leads to another; and we have the repetition of the taste for books in connection with the scholar’s dependence on his friends for the supply of his wants; his gratitude showing itself in prayers on their behalf. Line 19 is iteration carried to superfluity, and not redeemed by any poetic art—

Of studie took he most cure and most heede.

The concluding five lines are the gem of the description. The first—

Not oo word spak he more than was neede—

is very high praise felicitously summed up in a metrical utterance.

The two next lines expand the thought with additions—

And that was seid in forme and reverence.

And schort and qwyk, and ful of high sentence.

The scholar is supposed to be a man well versed in the maxims of prudence handed down from former ages, and at the same time able to express them in terse and dignified phraseology. This is the true ideal of scholarly attainments. It is carried out in the next line—

Sownynge in moral vertu was his speche—

indicating moral tone as well as prudential wisdom. The concluding line is the poet’s crowning effect—

And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

This hits off the love of knowledge in its noblest form; readi-

ness to imbibe from any master or any source, and equal readiness to impart. There is a usual type of scholarship, combining great reluctance to derive anything from others, and the fondness for imparting only what will bring the credit of originality. Chaucer's ideal is very different. The composition of the line is also notable. No doubt the phrase "gladly wolde he lerne" repeats what we have been told already, but the summary is so felicitous that we would not willingly dispense with it. In a prose description, cast in the strictest scientific order, the qualities set forth in these five lines, as well as in other parts of the passage, would be disentangled and given in separation; which no doubt would be an improvement as respects our understanding of the character. The poet is not bound by the same strictness: nevertheless, an arrangement of ideas suited to the clear understanding of the thought is not inconsistent with poetical treatment; it merely involves intelligence and pains at the outset. If an equal amount of adornment can be imparted to the more methodical arrangement, the reader finds it easier both to comprehend and to remember the entire composition.

The charm of the above passage, as a whole, may be accounted for on the general principles that regulate our interest in character, as poetically rendered. A bald prose description of the excellencies attaching to the subject would be highly agreeable; the poetic handling superadds an additional charm; and the combination makes up one of the perennial felicities of literary art.

Innumerable examples of character struck off on the descriptive plan are scattered through the field of poetry, ancient and modern. We have portraits, like the foregoing, intended to raise our admiration, and give us the pleasure thence accruing. We have others that are meant to cause indignation, dislike, contempt, or ridicule; giving scope to the still greater piquancy of the malevolent passion. From the extreme com-

plexity of human nature, the same person may raise in us various emotions—as Bacon. The personal satires of Dryden and of Pope are conducted by descriptive touches, and might be judged on the same plan as we have pursued with Chaucer ; the epigrammatic pungency being, however, more prominent than the other merits.

Among the many human peculiarities that please us, in the actual encounter, is to be reckoned moral excellence, in the form of self-renunciation. The self-seeker repels us; the man of unselfish impulses is viewed with satisfaction. He that gives up the common objects of pursuit for a higher ambition is an interesting character ; being agreeably contrasted with the mass of human beings, who keep up the rivalry that makes existence difficult to all.

Again, intellectual acquirements and excellence that either supply guidance in the dark ways of life or prepare for the displays of eloquence, call forth our complaisant admiration. This too is exemplified in Chaucer's Scholar. We feel ourselves drawn to such a man if we meet him in real life.

The peculiarities in question must, I repeat, be of rare and exceptional amount. Qualities that nearly everybody about us possesses may command a certain esteem from their worth, but they do not inspire us with lofty admiration.

The other mode of representing Character is by sustained action. This involves the narrative of incidents as in history ; so that poetry, when adopting this course, bears a resemblance to history, as we see in Homer and the epic poets generally, and also in our modern romance. The dramatic form is a special variety of the same kind of composition. When character is set forth in this mode, it falls under certain qualities or conditions of style, easy to state, but not so easy to apply in the detail : as, for example, Probability, Self-coherence, and Harmony with accompaniments and surroundings.

It belongs to the higher criticism of entire poems to say how far such conditions are imperative, and how far they are actually complied with in any given work. The disputes as to Shakespeare's intentions in Hamlet, Macbeth, and Lady Macbeth, as well as to the Faust of Goethe, seem to show that character criticism is apt to be uncertain and precarious, and, therefore, scarcely a subject for elementary lessons in the qualities of style. The difficulty is not the same with individual actions capable of being viewed in isolation. These we can value on their own account, without being involved in the estimate of character as a whole; while such minute criticism is, as in the case of style generally, the best preparation for the larger surveys that the ordinary critic most delights in.

The descriptive mode of handling character is often relieved by the short recital of actions by way of example or illustration. Thus the Clerk is represented as grateful to his friends who assisted him with the means of studying, and the gratitude is rendered in the act of praying for their souls. Milton's Mammon is set forth by descriptive touches, interspersed with illustrative actions :—

Mammon led them on—

Mammon, the least-erected spirit that fell
From heaven ; for even in heaven his looks and thoughts
Were always downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement, trodden gold,
Than aught, divine or holy, else enjoyed
In vision beatific. By him first
Men also, and by his suggestion taught,
Ransacked the centre, and with impious hands
Rifled the bowels of their mother earth
For treasures, better hid.

In this passage the expression is sufficient to render it poetical. The character interest, apart from the expression, is due not to our admiration or liking for the quality of avariciousness (for that we must take pleasure only in despising), but to the place

found for it in the general action of the poem ; which is to rouse the interest attaching to the rebellion of Satan and his host. Mammon is introduced as the constructor of the mighty palace erected in obedience to Satan's orders. It pleases Milton to connect the love of riches with skill in architecture, although the two things have no necessary connection, nor obvious harmony. For the demon of avarice a still more appropriate occupation might have been found ; as, in inspiring men with the love of money in all forms, and so drawing them on to the vices that follow in its train.

Whether Milton did well to tarnish the lustre of the unfallen angels by representing one of them as already given over to a sordid propensity, is a question that may be put for the sake of stimulating critical inquiry ; yet it hardly admits of an answer. In the region of the supernatural, great latitude is allowed and taken ; and we must judge solely by the artistic results. The Greek gods were permitted to exemplify all the round of vices, and the poets took advantage of their failings in using these for poetic purposes. Milton had to deal with the one mighty contrast of Heaven and Hell, and must have felt himself under restraint in varying the individualities of the members of the opposing hosts. He could not deviate much from the contrasting moral types ; the one class must possess an almost even goodness, the other an equally even badness ; the chief admissible variety being intellectual, shown in the differences of view as brought out in the debates of the leaders.

This lesson will close with a few more illustrations of its main theme—the portraying of character by descriptive epithets. Homer found scope for his genius in poetizing the characteristics of his heroes : his epithets are a part of his originality, and have set subsequent poets to work in the same line. His principal mode of describing character is by action, under which is included speech-making : but in introducing,

or in referring to, the chief personages (gods as well as men) he generally names them with a characteristic epithet. Agamemnon—king of men, shepherd of the people, wide-ruling ; Achilles—fleet of foot, noble, god-like ; Odysseus—heaven-born, many-counselling, full of devices, steadfast, goodly ; Hector—of the glancing helmet, rash, noble ; Diomedes—of the loud war-cry, stalwart ; Tydeides—great-hearted ; Ajax—Telamonian, heaven-descended ; Helen — beauteous-haired, long-robed, fair among women ; Aphrodite—bright, laughter-loving ; Athene—bright-eyed goddess ; Here—the white-armed goddess, the ox-eyed queen ; Zeus—father, far-seeing, ægis-bearing, cloud-gatherer, earth-shaker ; Iris—golden-winged, etc. The practice of coining epithets goes beyond persons, and is extensively employed both upon animals and upon inanimate things ; these epithets are a large part of the poetry of all times, and their effect is a topic for criticism.

Adhering to the subject of character epithets, and taking the Homeric examples as a study, we may easily divide them into several different kinds. Some are probably customary and prosaic—as noble, stalwart, rash : of this we cannot judge, as we know nothing of the every-day speech of the Greeks of Homer's time. The more strictly poetic epithets are partly elevating similitudes—as “god-like,” “shepherd of the people,” “king of men” (in some degree literal), “heaven-descended” ; and, still more frequently, selected circumstances, qualities, or adjuncts, interesting in themselves, and poetized by some elevating or picturesque phrase—fleet of foot, with the glancing helmet, beauteous-haired, long-robed, bright-eyed, white-armed, the cloud-gatherer, etc. An elevating, expressive, or suggestive metaphor or other similitude is at all times a stroke of poetry. Equally poetical is a well-chosen circumstantial among the various attributes of the object : the white-armed, the bright-eyed, the long-robed, the glancing helmet. The Rhetorician's synecdoches and metonymies, and other Contiguities, partly

square with this large class of perennial effects. They have their rules of propriety growing out of the occasions of their employment. Their poetic excellences are picturesqueness and elevation, with the absence of common-place. Their additional virtue lies in bodying forth, and in not obscuring, the point of character intended by them. In this respect, only a partial success is achieved by the greatest poets. In physical characteristics more especially, the power of poetry is very limited. Homer does nothing to assist us in picturing the real features of Helen; he works solely by the method of suggestive effects. So do other poets for the most part, and the result is usually extreme vagueness in the picture, with frequent emotional straining. Here is a personal description from Tennyson's Helen, in "A Dream of Fair Women":—

At length I saw a lady within call,
 Stillter than *chisell'd marble*, standing there;
 A daughter of the gods, *divinely tall*,
 And most divinely *fair*.

To this add—

The star-like sorrows of immortal eyes—

and we exhaust the aids given to our conception of the personal features.

Take next the same poet's picture of Cleopatra—

A queen, with swarthy cheeks and bold black eyes,
 Brow-bound with burning gold.

This is all that relates to her appearance. A fine stanza is devoted to her voice and utterance:—

Her warbling voice, a lyre of widest range,
 Struck by all passion, did fall down and glance
 From tone to tone, and glided thro' all change
 Of liveliest utterance.

The eyes are again brought before us, in their expressive movements:—

She raised her piercing orbs, and fill'd with light
 The interval of sound.

These instances of very slender descriptiveness will prepare us, in concluding our Lesson, to revert to Chaucer.

The example of the Clerk is not the best for the present purpose ; the personal touches are there but few. Take, however, the complete, not to say elaborate, description of the Miller, which leaves almost nothing to be desired in point of minuteness, while the touches are expressive and original, with an admirable effect of humour throughout. There is Chaucer's usual neglect of order ; there are illustrative actions thrown in, but not dwelt upon, as the Miller's power of wrestling and his unhinging a door with a blow of the head. The general setting is given, at the outset, in the phrase a " stout carl " ; next, he is big of braun, and of bones, to which correspond his displays of might ; his beard red as sow or fox, and broad as a spade ; on the top of his nose a wart with bristles ; his nose thick, black, and wide : his sword and buckler come between this and the powerful closing line—

His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.

This is an example of Chaucer's rude, coarse characters ; but we need only turn to the Prioress to see nearly the same fullness in the perfection of refinement. The description, as a whole, is more than ordinarily disarranged ; but the personal touches are exquisite and effective :—

Hire nose tretys (straight) ; hire eyen greye as glas ;
Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed ;
But sikerly sche hadde a fair forheed.
It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe.

The other parts of the Nun's character relate to the very beautiful *morale*, and are more fully supported by illustrative acts than in most of the other personages of the Prologue.

It is in the Drama, and in the modern Novel, that the interest of character-drawing has been pursued to its utmost ramifications. In these, the characters have usually a pro-

tracted history, and the largest part of the effect depends on their mutual action. Minute criticism, such as is exemplified in the present lessons, cannot readily grapple with such extended delineations; although every successful stroke must proceed upon the general laws here brought under review. The omission from our plan of the great field of Humour forbids our doing justice to the elucidation of the largest volume of character interest.

LESSON VI.

MANY lessons are wanted to bring out the successes and the failures in touching the springs of emotion by impassioned language. Our pleasurable feelings are aroused by various agencies, as actually occurring; by love, by natural grandeur, by shows, by music, and so on. The representative force of language is brought to bear in producing the effects without the causes in the actual. The previous lessons have already supplied examples in point. We shall take for our present lesson the power of Music, in connection with the grand Odes of Dryden and Pope.

The ostensible purpose of these odes is to recall and body forth the special emotional thrill that musical strains inspire in minds susceptible to the influence. How far they succeed in their design, may be best gathered by a close examination.

If the intention were to re-possess our minds of the literal pleasure of a piece of music, without a repetition of the original performance, the obvious mode would be to use those arts that assist the memory in recalling the pleasurable feelings of the past. We have the power of remembering at will any musical strains that we have listened to. The recollection, to be complete, should restore the full force of the original sensations. This, however, is scarcely ever possible. We may approximate to it, more or less, through the presence of closely and firmly associated circumstances, coupled with a good natural memory for music.

The poets in question do not proceed in such a fashion. Neither the end nor the means of poetry corresponds with the literal resuscitation of any one's experiences of music. The poet does not save us the attendance at a fresh musical entertainment by giving us back the pleasures of former ones. He makes up an entirely new product, of which music is the pretext and the central subject, but not the filling up.

The musical celebration of St. Cecilia's day gave birth to three of the finest odes in our language—two by Dryden and one by Pope. Dryden's second Ode, known as "Alexander's Feast," eclipsed the fame of his first, but does not render that one less suited for a lesson in the arts of awakening emotion by means of language.

The opening stanza, said by Sir Walter Scott to be the best in the poem, will detain us for a little time. It stands in some degree alone, and the ode would have sufficient unity and completeness without it.

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began ;
 When Nature underneath a heap
 Of jarring atoms lay,
 And could not heave her head,
 The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 " Arise, ye more than dead ".
 Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
 In order to their stations leap
 And Music's power obey.
 From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began ;
 From harmony to harmony
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
 The diapason closing full in man.

The high-sounding metre deserves all praise. This is one of Dryden's admitted distinctions as a poet. Nevertheless, metre is not enough. We must add that the words chosen have all, more or less, a flavour of emotion ; and that there is no obvious want of keeping, except what arises from the necessity

of supplying a contrast, to carry out more effectually the purpose of the poet, namely, to extol the power of music, and to make us feel that power.

Some account has to be taken of the imagery intended to aid in the effect. This is chosen from the greatest of all conceivable subjects—the creation of the world; a theme that, under a poet's hand, ought to yield the very highest sublimity. Nothing but a gross miscarriage in expression, or else the parroting of the merest commonplace, could make the theme fall flat. We have already credited the author of the Ode with metrical grandeur and with emotion-touched language. But when we examine his imagery for Creation, we find it a very jumbled mixture of the ideas of the old Greek philosophies, without the coherence that even poetry requires. There is a misapprehension on his part in representing any of the old theories as based on musical harmony. The nearest approach to it is the doctrine of Pythagoras, whose fundamental conception of the cosmos was Number; this he connected with music by the discovery of numerical ratios in the musical concords. As a further connection, he laid it down that the motions of the spheres were accompanied with musical sounds (a favourite poetical allusion); but he did not make music the sole creative force. Dryden has probably been caught by the double meaning of "harmony," namely, as a musical quality, and as orderly arrangement, being opposed to confusion or chaos. At all events, as regards the two first lines, he has made the mistake of referring, without any authority, the origin of the world to music. It is almost needless to criticize the phraseology further: "heavenly" harmony is made to operate in creating heaven which is itself but a part of the universal frame of things. The five lines following need a more particular examination.

When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay,—

is a figure utterly wanting in consistency of meaning, and

justifiable only on the condition that it can lend itself to poetry. The "jarring atoms" must be intended to give scope to the power of all-creating harmony. "Nature" in this connection has the same self-contradiction as the "heavenly" harmony: the jarring atoms cannot be separated from the totality of things usually expressed by the word.

And could not heave her head,—

is scarcely more than an iteration of the idea of the two previous lines.

The tuneful voice was heard from high,
"Arise, ye more than dead".

There is something besides music invoked here; there is an articulate voice of command, to which music lends aid or emphasis. This, however, is to depart from the main idea, the power of music by itself. The command, thus tunefully given, "Arise, ye more than dead," is not apposite to the situation, and, moreover, is tame. The jarring atoms have to be brought into better arrangement, and Nature rescued from their weight upon her head. The word "arise" scarcely applies to all; while "more than dead" is unsuitable alike to the jarring atoms and to Nature.

Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And music's power obey.

This is a scrap from another theory of the cosmos—the doctrine of Anaxagoras—in which Music has no particular place. That circumstance would not matter, provided the thought were poetically rendered and sustained. But, "In order to their stations leap" is not a powerful or an exciting phrase; and the concluding line is superfluous, after the fact is so decisively affirmed. Nor can we forget at once that "Music" is not now the sole power at work.

The closing lines of the stanza repeat the commencement, with a new turn so as to represent Creation in its successive stages.

From harmony to harmony,
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man.

There is here a change in the working out of the figure. The harmony, instead of being a power outside, is now embodied in the creative process; and, as the products advance in dignity, the musical harmony becomes richer, the climax being the creation of man. Although it was always agreeable to mankind to be flattered, and although the flattery has a poetic figure to express it—the diapason of musical sound—yet a doubt may arise whether the imagery as a whole comes home to our feelings. The work of creation marching to music is not an idea that strongly interests us; the phenomenon itself is so great as to dispense with such an addition, even if the addition be not an encumbrance.

To deal with the subject of Creation in any way is a hazardous undertaking. The very grandeur of the theme makes the difficulty. Its capabilities, indeed, mount to the loftiest sublime, yet the effect is seldom realized. The introduction of music as a creative agency cannot, in the present instance, be pronounced a success. It is neither founded on fact, nor agreeable to our imagination. There are some thoughts that would give us pleasure, provided they are true; there are some that would please us, provided they are even probable; there are others that possess a charm, though neither true nor probable. To get at the actual stages of the world's progress from its beginning, would be interesting in the highest degree; to arrive even at a probable hypothesis would be a great satisfaction. If we can attain to neither the one nor the other, and are to exercise our imagination simply, we must follow the laws of imaginative or emotional effect; we must be furnished with a conception thoroughly congenial to some habitual strain of feeling. Now there is at least one expression of creative agency that attains the utmost pitch of sublimity as a stroke of imagina-

tion, namely, "God said, Let there be light, and there was light". This may cease to be regarded as a literal fact, but it will never lose its effect on the human mind. We saw that Dryden slipped out of his musical cause, and took in the voice of command; and his instinct was right. A lofty personality exercising vast sway by a commanding word, is one of the things that affect us with the emotion of the sublime at its utmost stretch (see *Paradise Lost*, III. 706). Creative force is necessarily the highest exercise of might; but the analogy of the workshop carried out by production in detail, is not its most effective representation. Still less effective is Dryden's Music as the primeval force, inasmuch as we are entirely unaccustomed to regard music in this particular character.

The second stanza introduces the most famous historical and mythological examples of the power of music:—

What passion cannot music raise and quell?
 When Jubal struck the chorded shell,
 His listening brethren stood around,
 And, wondering, on their faces fell
 To worship that celestial sound:
 Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
 Within the hollow of that shell,
 That spoke so sweetly and so well:
 What passion cannot music raise and quell?

This is the best course to pursue. Music is fully recognized by us as a power over the human emotions; and we are prepared for the poet's illustrations of the fact. The first instance is Jubal, the inventor of the earliest musical instrument. The effect upon his listeners is described as made up of astonishment and the inspiration to worship. The case is rather overdone. We are not so transported with the splendour of the thought as to be unmindful of the necessarily humble character of Jubal's original shell. We cannot help being conscious of straining and exaggeration, which means a miscarriage of the attempt at sublimity.

The refrain—

What passion cannot music raise and quell?

is weak, in consequence of being repeated at the end of such an ineffective stanza; it would have told better in introducing the stanza following:—

The trumpet's loud clangour
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.
The double, double, double beat
Of the thundering drum,
Cries, hark! the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat.

Making every allowance for the force of the metre, which is great, and for the excitement of the subject—war, we cannot regard the instance as setting forth music in its own proper character. Fighting is the most express outcome of our malevolent emotion; it touches a chord that hardly ever fails to respond. The trumpet and the drum are stimulating in their association with war; apart from that they are nothing, and may be an offence to the ear. A highly trained band on the battle-field may add to the stimulus, and help to charm away the sense of danger; but bravery in fight has never relied upon such an artificial and costly adjunct.

The poet now passes from war to love.

The soft, complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

This is altogether feeble and confused. The flute may be soft, but it is not distinguished by dying notes, or by that degree of power that would discover the woes of the hopeless lover. The lute could not at once whisper and warble. Not much more relevant is the succeeding stanza.

Sharp violins proclaim
 Their jealous pangs, and desperation,
 Fury, frantic indignation,
 Depth of pains and height of passion,
 For the fair, disdainful dame.

It is not the instrument, so much as the tune and the execution, that have the effects supposed. Besides which, the poet incurs the very frequent fault of setting forth the evil much more powerfully than the remedy. Merely to *proclaim* the violence of love-passion is not to add to the credit of music. The string of energetic words made use of on the occasion scarcely preserves distinctness of meaning; and without this, strong terms become an inarticulate jargon. There is a considerable amount of tautology in "pangs," "pains," "fury," and "indignation," and the cumulative effect is simply emotional.

But oh! what art can teach,
 What human voice can reach
 The sacred organ's praise?
 Notes inspiring holy love,
 Notes that wing their heavenly ways
 To mend the choirs above.

The objections to the previous stanzas do not apply here. The organ has a character and capability as an instrument, irrespective of the handling. The two commencing lines are feeble and confusing. The first question, "What art can teach,—the organ's praise,"—is devoid of relevance. The second, "What human voice can reach," is infelicitous, from suggesting the unintended meaning of rivalry with the organ, to which the wording would be more appropriate. "What human *tongue*" might escape the ambiguity.

The three last lines are the poet's expression of the powers of the organ. The phrase "holy love" is both suggestive of tender feeling and appropriate, although not strikingly either the one or the other. The concluding expression is more venturesome and elevated, but does not escape the peril of exaggeration. The obviousness of the picture is hardly

redeemed by its taking captive some of our strong emotions. The epithet "heavenly" is always allowable when we have something great to express ; but to improve upon heaven is too hazardous.

Orpheus could lead the savage race ;
And trees uprooted left their place,
Sequacious of the lyre.

The legends of Orpheus have a permanent value in celebrating the power of music. The present allusion is scarcely full enough or pointed enough. We can tolerate the first line, but the allusion to trees is unsatisfactory : it is a detached item of the following of Orpheus, and, in its nakedness, rather deters us. In the original legend it falls into a group of instances of his power, which, so to speak, keep one another in countenance.* The effective employment of Orpheus we may see in Pope's Ode—namely, in the all but successful rescue of Eurydice from the shades. Next to this incident in power, is the part he bore among the Argonautic heroes.

But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher ;
When to her organ vocal breath was given,
An angel heard, and straight appeared,
Mistaking earth for heaven.

The legend of St. Cecilia is a Christian equivalent of Orpheus, and made her the patron saint of music. Her power, however, did not lie solely in her music, but also in her pure and holy life. The "mistaking earth for heaven" is a conceit of doubtful emotional value.

* The following is from the *Argonautica* of *Apollonius Rhodius* (Book I.), where Orpheus bears a distinguished part :—

The many stones his magic song obey'd ;
The torrents in their headlong fall were stay'd
Pieria's beeches heard the measures flow,
And left their mountains for the vale below :
There, listening captives of his tuneful hand,
In order ranged the green memorials stand.

Now comes the ambitious climax :—

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the blessed above.

This half of the stanza may be viewed by itself. The poet began with Creation, and returns to it in preparing for the close. Once more, however, he shifts his point of view. In the opening, he gave us snatches of early Greek philosophy ; he now repeats one of his former ideas, with a Christian addition, and so contradicts himself. Music (sacred lays, implying words) made the spheres to move, being thus itself the primeval cause of the world ; it then drops into the more humble but natural vocation of singing the Creator's praise to the heavenly host. It would need much more grandeur in the expression to surmount such a jumble of incoherent ideas. The "singing of the Creator's praise" is necessarily a lofty allusion, but familiarity detracts from its influence, and it needs to be well set in a fitting situation, in order to re-assert itself.

So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.

Grand as these lines are, they have the vice of incoherence. The subject is, in point of lofty sublimity, next to Creation ; while it comes home still more impressively to our feelings. The expression in the second line is a powerful stroke of imagery, which criticism gladly commends. The sounding of the trumpet naturally inspires awe ; but the remark made on a previous stanza is again applicable,—it is not the music that makes the power. The trumpet is the instrument chosen to announce the hour of judgment, and to herald the Judge's miraculous *fiat* in bringing the dead to life.

The fourth line fails to express its meaning ; the living are

not to die, but to pass through a change, assimilating them to the restored dead. The last line is also obscure or insufficient. It possibly means to continue the work of final destruction; the breaking up of the sky being typified by "untuning," or disharmonizing.

Ten years after the composition of this Ode, Dryden produced for the same Festival his "Alexander's Feast," whose magnificence of language, and metrical flow have raised it to the distinction of being one of the finest odes in our literature. We are not to examine its merits in detail; we may, however, consider how far it illustrates its theme—the power of music.

The poet creates the imposing situation of a feast given by Alexander to his officers; while, by his side, sits the beautiful Thais; and the singer-bard, Timotheus, performs a succession of inspiring airs. The first stanza is introductory; the second brings in Timotheus—

Timotheus, placed on high,
Amid the tuneful quire,
With flying fingers touched the lyre:
The trembling notes ascend the sky,
And heavenly joys inspire.

These two last lines express the effect of the music by itself; and they do not amount to much. "The trembling notes" is a suitable, but not very striking phrase; while "*heavenly joys*" is too readily resorted to, being applied to any intense pleasure, and not specially confined to music. The influence of the bard is, for the remainder of the poem, attributed more to the subjects of his song than to the melody. The theme in this stanza is given in the line succeeding the above—"The song began from Jove," whose adventures in love and in sovereignty are tersely set forth; together with the effect of the recital on the listening crowd, and on the monarch himself. The third stanza is the praise of Bacchus; and its power resides in the

sentiment, more than in the music. The fourth begins with the dangerous elation of Alexander, which Timotheus soon checks by passing to a mournful theme—the fate of Darius, which is touchingly detailed, and draws tears from the eyes of the conqueror. The fifth stanza guides Alexander's course to the love embrace of Thais :—

Softly sweet, in Lydian measures,
Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.

From this effeminate indulgence the poet wakens him up once more, with a stirring summons to Revenge :—

Now strike the golden lyre again ;
A louder yet, and yet a louder strain ;

until the king is made to seize a flambeau and rush off, led by Thais, upon an imaginary foe. This is the last of Alexander ; and the energy of the piece is really not the music but the musically-expressed oratory of the inspired bard. The final stanza is the comparison of Timotheus with St. Cecilia, and concludes—

Let old Timotheus yield the prize,
Or both divide the crown ;
He raised a mortal to the skies,
She drew an angel down.

The stanza, as a whole, is not highly effective. Cecilia is praised for her operative skill in enlarging the bounds of music, adding “length to solemn sounds,” working by “Nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before” : very high compliment, no doubt, but cold and intellectual ; it inspires no emotion in the reader, and does not contribute to the main theme.

Let us turn now for comparison from Dryden's Ode to Pope's, written for the same festival. Critics are divided as to the relative merits, and may remain so. Perhaps the comparison will give meaning to some of the expressions of Johnson in his celebrated contrast of the two great poets.

“The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce, or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden, therefore, are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden’s fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope the heat is more regular and constant.” This may be partly, but not wholly, true of the two St. Cecilia Odes, which are specially well fitted for testing the point. The first thing to remark in Pope is, that he addresses himself at once to the real subject—namely, to depict the power of the musical art, in itself, and without the accessories of poetry. This he does, in the two first stanzas, by means of general language, and without the aid of illustrative incidents. Certainly for a man that was so little sensitive to music as he gave himself out to be, the first stanza is a noble outburst, and a fine example of the imaginative power that can work without a basis of personal experience. No doubt, any one that united Pope’s genius with musical sensibility might have produced something still finer; but I am not aware of an example in point. The result only shows that mere musical sound cannot be so described as to stimulate our emotions to the highest pitch. A few lines from the first stanza will illustrate our meaning:—

In a sadly-pleasing strain
Let the warbling lute complain;
Let the loud trumpet sound,
Till the roofs all around
The shrill echoes rebound.

To make so much of the trumpet is confirmatory of the poet’s want of the delicacy of the musical sense. The same may be said of the next two lines—

While in more lengthened tones and slow
The deep, majestic, solemn organs blow.

The second stanza is a fine expression of the supposed influence of music on the passions, and might have been com-

posed without personal knowledge. It is simply forcible, and plausible, without coming home either to our actual experience, or to our imaginative pleasure.

By music, minds an equal temper know.
Nor swell too high, nor sink too low.

This is a very distant approximation to fact. There are more vigorous couplets still in the stanza ; but they have little felicity either as truth, or as feeling.

The third and remaining stanzas take up the story of Orpheus, and depict its phases, as only a great poet could do. Pope is well aware of the vantage ground that this gives him ; and he is careful to introduce the efficacy of music at the various critical junctures ; while, like Dryden, he avails himself of the art of Orpheus as a poet-musician. He also draws upon the interest of the love-inspired expedition for Eurydice ; involving, as that does, the horrors of the Shades.

The concluding stanza resumes and sums up the theme, in a comparison of Orpheus with St. Cecilia ; exquisitely rendered, but with the hollow ring that characterises the composition as a whole.

The experiment made by two men of the highest genius seems to show that the subject is not suitable to such ambitious treatment. If less were attempted, more might be made of it. The poet's own art, as a whole, whether accompanied by the lyre of old, or as detached from music in later times, is eminently suited to an inspired rendering ; and many exquisite specimens have been produced : I may refer to Homer in the *Odyssey*, to Shakespeare, to Milton, to Goethe (Wilhelm Meister and Torquato Tasso), and to Tennyson.

Detached and passing allusions to music are abundant in poetry, and often highly effective. This follows obedience to one great rule of art, namely, to dwell upon everything in proportion to its emotional efficacy. Musical allusions come best from poets themselves musical, as in Milton :—

There let the pealing organ blow
 To the full-voiced quire below,
 In service high and anthems clear,
 As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
 Dissolve me into ecstasies
 And bring all heaven before mine eyes.

The Shakespeare references to music are not very numerous, but are exquisite to a degree. The general moderation and sobriety of the handling are no less remarkable than the choice delicacy of the wording. The conclusion of the classic passage in the *Merchant of Venice* is a fine hyperbolic outburst in Shakespeare's grandest manner. The previous expressions are remarkable for subdued softness.

The combined felicity and truthfulness of Wordsworth's "Fiddler in Oxford Street," will remain among the finest illustrations of the power of Music. We feel that he has gone to work in the right way; instead of Orpheus, he gives us an assemblage gathered from the toiling throng in a London thoroughfare; and delineates the effect upon each listener with all his skill in the picturesque.

LESSON VII.

THE present lesson will be devoted to the Quality of Pathos. References have already been made to that quality, to its foundations in our Tender Feeling, and to the difficulties attending the embodiment.

It may have been gathered from various remarks scattered over the previous lessons, that the Tender or Loving side of our nature is made alive or awake by various causes: as the relations of the sexes, the parental relations, the tribal or social relations, friendship, and occasions of beneficence. Poetry operates powerfully in moving us through all these sources. By the love tale, our amatory feelings are kindled into agreeable activity. When the affection is prosperous, the interest

is all on the side of pleasure ; when there are reverses or disasters attending the affections, we are still interested ; the pain operating on the fountains of tenderness draws out a pleasing and soothing influence, to which we give the names pity, sorrow, sympathetic grief. As rendered in Poetry, this is *Pathos*, in the best sense of the term.

A notable incident in our country's history, namely, the melancholy death of the Princess Charlotte, in 1817, gave occasion to innumerable outbursts of sympathetic sorrow. Our universal pulpit embraced the theme, and the discourses of the two most famous preachers of the time—Hall and Chalmers—still survive as Literature. Byron was in the act of finishing *Childe Harold* ; his mind was deeply agitated by the fate of the Royal Princess, and he introduced into his poem the well-known episode (Fourth canto, stanzas 167—172), which we may probably regard as the greatest, in point of *Pathos*, of all the contributions to the mournful occasion. This passage we select as an illustrative lesson.

Hark ! forth from the abyss a voice proceeds,
A long low distant murmur of dread sound,
Such as arises when a nation bleeds
With some deep and immedicable wound.

The poet prepares for us a grand and awful situation, to start from—the opening of the abyss, and the emergence of a voice—the sound made impressive by the number of epithets, all easily realizable. Strength, with awe, is the characteristic of the picture. Next is the shadowing forth of the main subject in the form of a terse and powerful comparison : “as when with deep immedicable wound a nation bleeds”. There is a felicity of condensation in the whole device.

Through storm and darkness yawns the rending ground,
The gulf is thick with phantoms, but the chief
Seems royal still, though with her head discrowned,
And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief
She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief.

We have still the continuation of the sublime and terrible picture ; storm and darkness being superadded to the abyss. Then comes a host of phantoms : these we are dimly to conceive, while singling out the chief of them all ; the description of which in the three last lines passes from strength to pathos. The discrowned royalty is still an image of strength and elevation ; even a negative does not at once destroy that effect. The two concluding lines are the purest pathos. All the circumstances of the maternal relationship are at their utmost stretch—it being the moment of giving birth ; while the double tragedy immerses the onlooker in sympathetic grief. The picturing epithets—pale, lovely, clasping to the breast—enhance the situation by no mere common-place string of words : they all belong to the vocabulary of pure pathos. The sympathy for the affliction or prostration is increased by the personal beauty and all the interesting adjuncts or qualities of the object : hence the special force of “lovely” as an epithet. Farther examples will occur presently.

Scion of chiefs and monarchs, where art thou ?
Fond hope of many nations, art thou dead ?
Could not the grave forget thee, and lay low
Some less majestic, less beloved head ?

The figure of Interrogation is here appropriate. Then as to the thought, it is impossible to avoid the piquant contrast of high worldly position in the premature embrace of death. The first line is not so much pathos as a painful shock of surprise, taking the direction of humbling the proud, and increasing the sense of insecurity as against death. The second line has real pathos, from the altered turn of the thought ; instead of “scion of chiefs and monarchs” suggestive of pride, it is “fond hope of many nations” implying a widespread affection and sense of deprivation. The third and fourth lines but enhance the ideas of contrast in the first and second.

In the sad midnight, while thy heart still bled,
 The mother of a moment, o'er thy boy,
 Death hush'd that pang for ever : with thee fled
 The present happiness and promised joy
 Which filled the imperial isles so full it seem'd to cloy.

A recurrence to the pathos of the situation, with a new setting. The stern fact is given again ; and is followed up with the iteration of the national bereavement. The expression of the whole is intensified under the poet's second touch. The third stanza sustains the sad theme, with some additions.

Peasants bring forth in safety.—Can it be,
 Oh thou that wert so happy, so adored !

This, of course, is an exaggeration ; peasants suffer in the same way, and even more than princesses. The poetic value is also doubtful. The safe thing would be to put the high and the low on an equality in such risks ; if not strictly correct, it is sufficiently so for the moral effect. The second line again enhances the sympathetic sorrow ; so "happy," so "adored" : the unhappy and the neglected we pass carelessly by, in their grief.

Those who weep not for kings shall weep for thee,
 And Freedom's heart, grown heavy, cease to hoard
 Her many griefs for ONE ; for she had pour'd
 Her orisons for thee, and o'er thy head
 Beheld her Iris.—

Here is a change of view. The poet sees in the future of the expected succession to the crown a new guarantee for our political liberties ; and mourns the princess at the expense of her parentage. The allusion has touches of poetical force allied to pathos, but it is brief to the point of obscurity. In the outpourings of prose on the occasion, this point would be frequently made prominent ; and it is well suited to a prose handling. But it is somewhat removed from the extreme pathos of the situation. The element of gratitude for promised

political good and of chagrin for the failure of the promise, undoubtedly lands us in regrets and self-pity, containing, however, but a small portion of the purest tender feeling.

Thou, too, lonely lord,
And desolate consort—vainly wert thou wed !
The husband of a year ! the father of the dead !

This is the pathetic mourning for the husband, who, as the survivor, comes in for a share of pity. It can scarcely be called comfort : it is an all too energetic expression of his sad bereavement ; an energy very natural to the author, but not yielding solace to the victim. The theme is continued in the two first lines of the stanza following.

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made ;
The bridal's fruit is ashes ;

Greatly too energetic and severe ; without one softening touch. It only aggravates the painful part of grief ; better let the sufferer pass by in silence, unless the occasion prompts to a burst of original language.

—in the dust
The fair-haired daughter of the Isles is laid,
The love of millions !

The close of the apostrophe to the bridegroom, and scarcely introducing any ray of comfort. There is a repetition of the pathos of beauty and belovedness ; yet bringing to the comfort of the husband nothing but what he might extract from the attachment and grief of the nation.

How did we intrust
Futurity to her ! and though it must
Darken above her bones, yet fondly deem'd
Our children should obey her child, and bless'd
Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise seem'd
Like stars to shepherd's eyes :—'twas but a meteor beam'd.

For the third time the poet expatiates on this theme—the

national hopes founded on the birth that ended in death. The expression attains now its highest pitch ; and the circumstances are highly charged with the pathetic and tender interest. The fine figure—"like stars to shepherd's eyes"—has an element of grandeur yet not in discord with the tones of affection preceding. The concluding clause—" 'twas but a meteor beam'd"—gives the tragic fact with somewhat needless iteration, and no redeeming comfort.

We have now a stanza with a view of attenuating the hard fate of the princess.

Woe unto us, not her : for she sleeps well :

A fine line in itself ; the everlasting pathos of a few simple terms, as a consequence of their thorough appropriateness. The remainder of the stanza is a highly-wrought picture of the perils and hard fate of monarchs ; the tragic strength so much more congenial to Byron than pathos. The pretext is to furnish a contrast to a different picture to follow.

The fickle reek of popular breath, the tongue
Of hollow counsel, the false oracle,
Which from the birth of monarchy hath rung
Its knell in princely ears, till the o'erstung
Nations have armed in madness, the strange fate
Which humbles mightiest sovereigns, and hath flung
Against their blind omnipotence a weight
Within the opposing scale, which crushes soon or late,—

This splendid denunciation of the enemies that sovereignty has to contend against, rests on its own independent merits, and is out of the line of the pathetic wail for the princess. The selection and accumulation of impressive circumstances, heightened by the poet's strength of imagery, would stand criticism as vituperative oratory. Its ostensible place in the present passage is to act as a contrast to a truly pathetic description. Like many such contrasts, it is needlessly worked out, as far as the purpose is concerned. Let us glance at the next stanza.

These might have been her destiny ; but no,
Our hearts deny it : and so young, so fair,
Good without effort, great without a foe !

So far this is well. There is pathos in all the circumstances, although with some iteration. We have seen her as 'fair'; we have now her youth; and next her goodness epigrammatically pointed; the epigram, however, is more allied to energy than to pathos. Nevertheless, there is a nobility in the thought expressed in the third line, and it does not jar with the general effect.

But now a bride and mother—and now *there!*

The poet cannot help falling back once more upon the shock of the transition, which he puts with his usual energetic brevity. He makes it the starting-point of a new outburst, mingling strength with real pathos.

How many ties did that stern moment tear !
From thy Sire's to his humblest subject's breast
Is linked the electric chain of that despair,
Whose shock was as an earthquake's, and opprest
The land which loved thee so that none could love thee best.

This repeats with a bold figure both the numerous relationships of the princess, and the intensity of them all, including once more the attachment of the nation at large. Any picture of intense affection inspires our sympathetic tenderness, and prepares us for the sorrow and grief of a calamitous rupture. In so far as the whole effect redeems the misery of the contemplation, it is pathos in the highest sense.

Reviewing now the passage as a whole, we cannot help being struck with its richness of handling, with the superabundance of effects of Strength, intermingled with genuine Pathos. We are also arrested by the lack of consecutive arrangement. Instead of working up each thought continuously and fully, the poet comes back again and again upon the same point, improving the impression each time. This would be bad in prose, and it detracts from the merit of poetry, although not incompatible with very high effects. If

any great poet had bestowed pains upon an Ode on the occasion, he would probably have kept each stanza to a distinct point in the situation; but Byron must have dashed off the passage hastily, and it has merits sufficient to give it a place in his poem; while the casual reader is not struck with the defects of order. There can be little doubt, nevertheless, that the same grandeur of imagery in a better arrangement would have impressed us far more, although we might not be conscious of the reason of the superiority.

The mixing of pathos with strength and tragic horror is not peculiar to Byron, although suitable to his genius and temperament.

We shall now avail ourselves of the help of comparison. Among the numerous effusions on the same event, we may single out, first, the well-known sermon of Robert Hall. Happily, the material for the comparison does not exceed a quotable passage, where the preacher aims at setting forth the pathetic aspects of the occasion.

He begins with a sketch of the lofty situation, high character, and splendid hopes of the princess; all managed so as to excite our friendly interest. More especially touching are these expressions:—"To a grandeur of mind suited to her royal birth and lofty destination, she joined an exquisite taste for the beauties of nature and the charms of retirement; when, far from the gaze of the multitude, and the frivolous agitations of fashionable life, she employed her hours in visiting, with her distinguished consort, the cottages of the poor, in improving her virtues, in perfecting her reason, and acquiring the knowledge best adapted to qualify her for the possession of power and the cares of empire". This has too much of the author's stately manner to lend itself at once to pathos; but it is all strictly to the point. Still better is the paragraph that succeeds, although that also is but preparatory. The princess is repre-

sented as anticipating "a long series of years, and expecting to be led through successive scenes of enchantment, rising above each other in fascination and beauty". "Her heart would often be ruffled with emotions of trembling ecstasy, when she reflected that it was her province to live entirely for others, to compose the felicity of a great people, to move in a sphere which would afford scope for the exercise of philanthropy the most enlarged, of wisdom the most enlightened; and that she was to supply the materials of history, and to impart that impulse to society, which was to decide the destiny of future generations. Fired with the ambition of equalling, or surpassing, the most distinguished of her predecessors, she probably did not despair of reviving the remembrance of the brightest parts of their story; and of once more attaching the epoch of British glory to the annals of a female reign. It is needless to add that the nation went with her, and probably outstripped her, in these delightful anticipations. We fondly hoped that a life so inestimable would be protracted to a distant period, and that, after diffusing the blessings of a just and enlightened administration, and being surrounded by a numerous progeny, she would, gradually, in good old age, sink under the horizon, amidst the embraces of her family and the benedictions of her country. But, alas! these delightful visions are fled, and what do we behold in their room, but the funeral pall and shroud, a palace in mourning, a nation in tears, and the shadow of death settled over both like a cloud!"

The expression here grows in pathetic adjuncts to the end. The sympathies of the nation are effectively handled for the purpose. The concluding sentence announces the catastrophe in selected circumstances and language of the most impressive kind. For such a tragic occasion, the painful side of grief must preponderate; nevertheless, the grandeur of the expression has the soothing influence that the genius of the poet evokes from calamitous situations.

The preacher's pathos attains its height in his sympathy for the bereaved parents and husband. It would be difficult to surpass the tender interest awakened in this passage :—

How must the heart of the royal parent be torn with anguish on this occasion ; deprived of a daughter, who combined every quality suited to engage his affection and elevate his hopes ; an only child, the heir of his throne ; and doomed, apparently, to behold the sceptre pass from his posterity into other hands ; his sorrow must be such as words are inadequate to portray. Nor is it possible to withhold our tender sympathy from the unhappy mother, who, in addition to the wounds she has received by the loss of her nearest relations, and by still more trying vicissitudes, has witnessed the extinction of her last hope, in the sudden removal of one in whose bosom she might naturally hope to repose her griefs, and find a peaceful haven from the storms of life and the tossings of the ocean. But above all, the illustrious consort of this lamented Princess is entitled to the deepest commiseration. How mysterious are the ways of Providence, in rendering the virtues of this distinguished personage the source of his greatest trials ! By these he merited the distinction to which monarchs aspired in vain, and by these he exposed himself to a reverse of fortune, the severity of which can only be adequately estimated by this illustrious mourner. These virtues, however, will not be permitted to lose their reward. They will find it in the general attachment of the British nation, in the remembrance of his having contributed the principal share to the happiness of the most amiable and exalted of women.

The other great preacher of the period, Thomas Chalmers, touched the same situation in a somewhat more condensed passage, which it is interesting to compare with the foregoing. Chalmers had a more prolific imagination than Hall, but not the same elegance or polish. After adverting to the want of access by the general public to the inner or domestic life of royalty, Chalmers proceeds :—

Now, if through an accidental opening, the public should be favoured with a domestic exhibition,—if, by some overpowering visitation of Providence upon an illustrious family, the members of it should come to be recognised as the partakers of one common humanity with ourselves—if, instead of beholding them in their gorgeousness as princes, we look to them in the natural evolution of their sensibilities as men—if the stately palace should be turned into a house of mourning—in one word, if death should do what he has already done,—he has met the Princess of England in the prime and promise of her days, and as she was moving onward on her march to a hereditary throne, he has laid her at his feet ! Ah ! my brethren, when the imagination dwells on that bed where the remains of departed youth and departed infancy are lying—when, instead of

crowns and canopies of grandeur, it looks to the forlorn husband, and the weeping father, and the human feelings which agitate their bosom, and the human tears which flow down their cheeks, and all such symptoms of deep affliction as bespeak the workings of suffering and dejected nature—what ought to be, and what actually is, the feeling of the country at so sad an exhibition? It is just the feeling of the domestics and the labourers at Claremont. All is soft and tender as womanhood. Nor is there a peasant in our land, who is not touched to the very heart when he thinks of the unhappy stranger who is now spending his days in grief and his nights in sleeplessness—as he mourns alone in his darkened chamber, and refuses to be comforted—as he turns in vain for rest to his troubled feelings, and cannot find it—as he gazes on the memorials of an affection that blessed the brightest, happiest, shortest year of his existence—as he looks back on the endearments of the bygone months, and the thought that they have for ever fled away from him, turns all to agony—as he looks forward on the blighted prospect of this world's pilgrimage, and feels that all which bound him to existence, is now torn irretrievably away from him! There is not a British heart that does not feel to this interesting visitor all the force and all the tenderness of a most affecting relationship; and, go where he may, will he ever be recognised and cherished as a much-loved member of the British family.

This is tender feeling, as grief and sorrow, expressed with a power and freshness of language that saves it from maudlin, notwithstanding the intensity. All the pertinent circumstances are touched, as in Byron and in Hall; while the speaker is peculiar in his endeavour to put the royal family and ourselves upon a level of sympathizing intimacy. The contrast of the greatness and the fall is fully expressed. The concrete embodiment of grief is powerfully marked out, as in Hall—"the forlorn husband and the weeping father". The melancholy fate of the husband is dwelt upon with every circumstance that can evoke our tender interest; and the responsive sympathy of the British people put forward as a solace and consolation.

The comparison of these two passages with Byron is an instructive lesson in itself. For one thing, the prose of both is much better in point of arrangement: Byron's irregularity in this respect would not be allowed in the most impassioned prose. The poet's advantage lies in the growing intensity of his language at each repetition. In sustained flow, Chalmers carries

away the palm ; the strength of his own feelings being probably the explanation.

From any one of the foregoing examples, and still better from a comparison of the three, the student can see the modes of pathetic expression under a great domestic calamity. The salient points are seized alike by all three great writers ; while each has his strong and his weak points, as shown in the minute analysis.

The incident now chosen for exemplifying Pathos is an extreme case ; it can hardly be overdone ; and no one would approach it without being moved by a genuine inspiration. The miscarriages of the tender passion are better shown on less exciting occasions. One instance is furnished by Chalmers in his sermon on Cruelty to Animals. His tendency to exaggeration is here unsupported by corresponding strength of real feeling.

The following sentences are fairly admissible as both true and impressive :—

These poor animals just look, and tremble, and give forth the very indications of suffering that we do. Theirs is the distinct cry of pain. Theirs is the unequivocal physiognomy of pain. They put on the same aspect of terror on the demonstrations of a menaced blow. They exhibit the same distortions of agony after the infliction of it. The bruise, or the burn, or the fracture, or the deep incision, or the fierce encounter with one of equal or superior strength, just affects them similarly to ourselves. Their blood circulates as ours. They have pulsations in various parts of the body like ours. They sicken, and they grow feeble with age ; and, finally, they die just as we do. They possess the same feelings ; and, what exposes them to like suffering from another quarter, they possess the same instincts with our own species. The lioness robbed of her whelps causes the wilderness to ring aloud with the proclamation of her wrongs ; or the bird, whose little household has been stolen, fills and saddens all the grove with melodies of deepest pathos.

The orator is now carried away, not by his feelings, but by the strength of his language, into a strain of palpable exaggeration, which utterly defeats his purpose.

Theirs is unmixed and unmitigated pain—the agonies of martyrdom, without the alleviation of the hopes and the sentiments, whereof they are incapable. When they lay them down to die, their only fellowship is with suffering; for in the prison-house of their beset and bounded faculties, there can no relief be afforded by communion with other interests or other things. The attention does not lighten their distress as it does that of man, by carrying off his spirit from that existing pungency and pressure which might else be overwhelming. There is but room in their mysterious economy for one inmate; and that is, the absorbing sense of their own single and concentrated anguish. And so in that bed of torment, whereon the wounded animal lingers and expires, there is an unexplored depth and intensity of suffering which the poor dumb animal itself cannot tell, and against which it can offer no remonstrance; an untold and unknown amount of wretchedness, of which no articulate voice gives utterance. But there is an eloquence in its silence; and the very shroud which disguises it, only serves to aggravate its horrors.

The smallest discernment will show that this cannot be either true or probable. It is a study of hyperbole carried to the pitch of extravagance and failure. A certain amount of heightening is permissible both in poetry and in oratory; and the first quoted extract is not too much: the second is beyond all bounds of credibility, while, as imagination, it is not pleasing, but the reverse.

For domestic pathos kept within limits, and on that account, producing its full effect, we may refer to Cowper's piece entitled—"On the receipt of his mother's picture". In all the examples that we have been considering, the tender feeling is disturbed by imagery more or less alien to it; this cannot be said of the following lines, nor indeed of any part of the poem:—

My mother! when I learned that thou wast dead,
 Say, wast thou conscious of the tears I shed?
 Hovered thy spirit o'er thy sorrowing son,
 Wretch even then, life's journey just begun?
 Perhaps thou gav'st me, though unfelt, a kiss;
 Perhaps a tear, if souls can weep in bliss.
 Ah, that maternal smile! it answers—Yes.
 I heard the bell tolled on thy burial day,
 I saw the hearse that bore thee slow away,
 And, turning from my nursery window, drew
 A long, long sigh, and wept a last adieu!

The vocabulary and the circumstances of pathos are sustained in every line; while there is a temperance in the passion that satisfies the most fastidious taste.

In the point of expressing tender emotion with the reserve that secures our thorough sympathy, Cowper passes a still greater ordeal, in taking as a theme the Love of Country. We necessarily feel a certain amount of warm attachment to our country, but it is scarcely a case for tender feeling pure and simple; so many other sentiments concur. Cowper takes the just measure of the case, in his "Love of England," and is still more sternly reserved in his "English Liberty". He has happily combined poetry with sober-minded patriotism, in his famous line—

"England, with all thy faults, I love thee still."

The genius of Campbell has adorned many sorrowful tales, and evoked pathos of the healing kind; he being well aware that pain and horror cannot be a poet's subject unless duly atoned for. His "Lord Ullin's Daughter" is redeemed by the love affection of the bright and youthful pair; to which is added the father's melting with pity and forgiveness as he beholds the peril of his child. The self-devotion of the boatman in the service of the "winsome lady," adds to the volume of tenderness that reconciles us to the perusal of the sad story.

The pathos of the "Dying Gladiator" is not of the pure type. The horror is redeemed, if at all, by the forecast of vengeance when Rome should perish under the shock of the gladiator's countrymen. This is the stirring of the malevolent side of our emotional nature, which has its own pleasures, equally at the command of the poet, but not, in the strict sense, describable as pathos.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEFINITION OF POETRY.

THE most obvious way to arrive at the definition of a general name is to survey the individual things denoted by the name ; to compare them one with another, and to find out the points wherein they all agree. This would be the way to obtain the definition of a metal, of a planet, of a bird, of a savage, of force, of law.

Every one cognizant of the incidents that attend the defining process is aware of one difficulty, not unfrequent—namely, that a comparison of the things that have received the name in current speech reveals scarcely any great or important attributes inhering in them all. In fact, from well-understood causes, a name is sometimes so loosely applied as to swamp the agreements that we should expect to find under it. The word “Nature” will exemplify this careless employment.

The term “Poetry” is of the same kind. It has been scattered with such profuseness over the field of literature, that we are at a loss to find any community at all, still less a number of points of community, at once striking and important. Yet, without some prevailing peculiarity, or peculiarities, and these of considerable significance, the notion, when got at, is worthless and illusory, and the name a superfluity or else a snare.

There is often a peculiar incisiveness in defining by Negation ; in stating what a thing *is not*. In dealing with the word “Nature,” we make a considerable approach to clearness by

negative attributes,—“not Art,” “not artificial,” “not acquirement or education,” and so on.

The method has been applied to Poetry and has yielded the most precise of the definitions that have obtained currency. Yet such is the subtlety and the slipperiness of the notion, that it has, in a measure, evaded even this powerful application.

The Old Logic gives us the method of defining *per genus et differentiam*; which is very well, provided the exact genus is known and agreed upon: as, when we say that a church is a *building*, or that botany is a *science*. Poetry ought, I believe, to rank under the genus Fine Art; but apparently this is not allowed, if we may judge from the fact that it is scarcely ever adduced in the course of the many attempts at a definition. Then, again, Fine Art itself is not clearly circumscribed; it repeats in the genus the very difficulties that belong to the species.

There are a few terms that may be looked upon as synonyms of Poetry to this extent, that *their* definition is settled, if *its* is settled. One I have just mentioned—namely, Art in general. Others are—Beauty, Genius, Imagination, Ideality. If these could be all independently cleared up, Poetry would follow them at no great distance. Contrariwise, when it is defined, so will they be.

The difficulty of the case is farther ascribable to the want of prior definitions of the constituents that are always made to enter into the notion. As being a highly complex notion, it must be defined by stating its component parts; but we shall see presently that the words commonly used for this purpose are the names of very vague ideas.

Farther, the notions that Poetry comes into contact with, partly through common participation, partly through contrast, are themselves wanting in precision; indeed, some of them depend greatly upon a clear understanding of the meaning of poetry. Thus it certainly comes into contact with Pleasure in

some shape or other; also, with Morality; with Nature; not least, with Religion. Then again, it frequently overlaps the field of Eloquence, and the two are very difficult to separate. Poetry often passes into Eloquence, and Eloquence is often heightened by poetry; yet this is no reason why each should not have its own proper field well marked out. The most useful forms of the metallic bodies are alloys: yet the chemist takes care to state the properties of the constituents in their purity; while he does not insist on calling brass, or bronze, copper. So there should be something typical of Poetry in its purest form; even although the majority of Poems may not adhere to the type. There may be good reasons for not adhering, in a composition of some length, to any unmixed style; nevertheless, the fact of mixture is apt to be misleading. Pope probably considered that all he wrote was alike poetry.

Of the subjects touching upon poetry, whether by likeness, or by contrast, the most manageable is Science. Science admits of a clear definition in itself; it is one of the chief contrasts of Poetry, and the occasional mixture of the two is the least puzzling of any of the mixtures. Poetry sometimes takes up scientific generalities, as in the hands of Tennyson; and Science is occasionally made to appear poetical: but the respective characters of the two departments are never confounded beyond the possibility of separation. If it were as easy to disentangle the complications of Poetry with Eloquence, we should be much nearer the desired solution.

The contrast of Poetry with the other Fine Arts is very easy to assign, when we have settled the generic idea of Art.

The more popular contrast of Poetry with Prose has, I think, been made sufficiently plain in the course of the many discussions that have taken place among critics.

If the task of defining is so difficult in this case, why may we not leave it alone? What is to be got by it, even if we

were to succeed? A rather important question, admitting of two answers—one general, one particular. The general answer would be to show the importance of precise definitions of all leading words. If a term conveys approbation, or the opposite, justice requires that its employment should not be vague. It is a great compliment to call a man generous: but if you do not so apply the word as to discriminate exactly the good quality meant by it,—if you apply it to people that give away what does not belong to them, or what they should spend upon their own families,—you misapply it to the extent of confounding good and evil.

And of Poetry in particular, the reasons for exactness in the definition are very strong. The subject is one of vast magnitude; it has occupied the labours of many of the most gifted of mankind; and has exercised incalculable influence upon human conduct. Its effects have not been unmixed: sometimes, it has been positively perverting and noxious; at other times, it has failed to do all the good it might do. Moreover, its pretensions are often enormous. The poet is frequently described as inspired; as a revealer of truth, a spiritual guide, a light in darkness, and a consolation in misery. Such pretensions necessarily provoke scrutiny; but, in order to such scrutiny, we must first settle the province of poetry.*

Let us then begin by adverting to some of the various attempts to deal with the question. Most of the existing definitions contain an element of the truth: it is easy to go so far; it is less easy to get the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Thus, the definition given by Aristotle in his *Art of Poetry*,

* The remark of Symonds on the great sculptor Flaxman, that he had not a true knowledge of the limitations of his art, would apply to many artists, poets included. A thoroughly exhaustive definition of Art would come in as a corrective of wrong tendencies in artists themselves.

namely, an Imitative Art, is a part of the truth. It appertains to Poetry, in common with other Fine Arts ; but it does not apply to the whole of the Arts, nor to all Poetry. Its deficiencies are supplemented so far by the Baconian definition, which is also very Wordsworthian ; this starts from effusiveness, phantasy, the outpouring from within, as opposed to copying or derivation from without. Wordsworth, in his Preface to Lyrical Ballads, says, "Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings". Now both modes of defining—by Imitation and by Effusion—are applicable to the subject, but both must be qualified or conditioned, in order to their being applied with the requisite degree of closeness. There are unpoetic imitations and unpoetic outpourings ; so that the quality that we are in quest of, is not yet given in its simpleness or purity.

Of more modern definitions, the "interpretation of nature" has been received with favour. The poet reads or interprets meanings in the face of nature that the unpoetic mind cannot discover. For example, of Peter Bell it is said—

A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Now the fact must be allowed ; but "interpreting" is not, in my judgment, or in the view of many critics, the proper word. The poet does not evoke, but *adds on* ; he combines with the naked appearance something extraneous whereby he can impart new interest. He *assimilates* a mountain, a rock, a waterfall, a tree, a flower, with some aspect of humanity, charged with emotion,—the mountain, the rock, the waterfall, with energy or strength ; the flower with tender feeling, the tree with one or both ; and thus provokes a certain outburst of these emotions. In no proper meaning can such emotions be said to be wrapt up in the objects themselves.

Let us, for the sake of an illustrative view, borrow the

Platonic theory of Creation by a mediate power or personage, whom Pláto calls the Demiurgus. Let us suppose that there was a division of labour, and that one such personage had charge of the mineral and plant department of nature, with all the implicated physical laws, but had no cognizance of the region of sentient life and humanity; being at the same time forbidden to intrude his own emotions into his handiwork. Such a being would, of course, understand all the secrets of his own particular work; he would trace all physical consequences, and all organic consequences, in the region of vegetation; he would know the yellow primrose; but, not being thoroughly cognizant of the human mind, its susceptibilities and its actings, he could form no notion as to the way that the physical world would operate upon it. He would understand how gravity, cohesion, and other forces made mountains, but he would not understand how these produced emotions in human minds, quite apart from the physical structure. Knowing the deepest secrets of the physical world, in its own physical nature, he would yet be powerless to interpret it in any other way. Of its poetic capabilities and poetic meanings he would be wholly uninformed.

I observe that Principal Shairp, in his highly interesting and instructive volume—*The Aspects of Poetry*, uses, instead of interpretation, the “penetration” of nature. But whether it be stated in one form or in the other, my contention is, that “assimilation” expresses the true state of the case; although the notion needs a farther specifying term, to bring out the poetic quality. This, however, is the case with interpretation and penetration. Newton was a grand interpreter, but not in the poetic acceptance. Bacon constantly describes man, in his capacity of scientific enquirer, as interpreting nature.

Another definition is the “spiritualising” of nature and life. This is much better, in so far as it indicates a difference between poetry and science, which the previous terms do not.

It is defective chiefly in respect that it substitutes a term that itself wants defining. We can vaguely guess what is intended by it; we know the difference between matter and spirit, body and mind. If "personify" had been used, we should have understood it still better. We know that poetry is very largely occupied with personification; still this would not express all poetry. We understand "spiritual" in another sense, as opposed to "carnal," "fleshly," "grovelling". It is a word that belongs principally to religion, and only incidentally to poetry. There is a third mode of employing the term that is still less applicable,—namely, to what is abstract, subtle, supersensual, immaterial, impalpable: this is the very negation of poetic form, which revels in the concrete and pictorial, giving to airy nothing a local habitation.

On Mr. Matthew Arnold's recent utterance respecting Poetry—"a criticism of Life"—I do not dwell at this stage. An able writer, both poet and critic, Mr. Alfred Austin, has taken it to pieces, in two articles in the *Contemporary Review* (Dec., 1881, and Jan., 1882), and has substituted for it a definition of his own, which is unexceptionable so far as it goes, and serves one purpose of a good definition, namely, to bring reason to the aid of intuitive judgment in the subtler points of criticism. According to Mr. Austin, poetry is the imaginative raising or heightening of matter of fact. He illustrates this under the four heads—perception, feeling, thought, action: to which correspond, he says, the four kinds of Poetry—Descriptive (perception), Lyrical (feeling), Reflective (thought), Epic or Dramatic (action).

Mr. Austin's criticism of Wordsworth from this standpoint is highly suggestive; and one would not find it easy to turn the flank of his reasoning, when he makes out certain passages to be wholly devoid of the poetic force or quality.

He pronounces this passage to be too literal for poetry. It is taken from "Simon Lee, the Old Huntsman":—

And he is lean, and he is sick ;
 His body, dwindled and awry,
 Rests upon ankles swollen and thick ;
 His legs are thin and dry.
 One prop he has, and only one,
 His Wife, an aged woman,
 Lives with him, near the waterfall,
 Upon the village common.

Next is given an instance of imaginative transfiguration. It is called "The Reverie of Poor Susan". This is the first stanza :—

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
 Hangs a thrush that sings loud; it has sung for three years :
 Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard,
 In the silence of morning, the song of the bird.

This is transfigurative, or imaginative, poetry.

How is it done, he asks, and answers, "I really do not know". It seems to me, however, that some account of the transfiguring art is possible, although occasionally it is too complex for analysis. To go no farther: in thousands of instances, a figure does the work; and the precise reason for the effect can be given. Death is literal; "sleep," as a name for death, is perennially poetical, and any one of us can say why.*

What I strongly commend in Mr. Austin's definition is the employment of the words "emotion," "imagination," instead of the terms that have been already reviewed. To emotion we must come at last, in any precise definition. Yet, further, we must say what emotions are to be designated as poetical. According as we can specify and define these emotions, we shall succeed in laying a basis at least for the superstructure of a definition of poetic art.

* We might here perform an operation, the opposite of parody, on Sancho Panza's fine humour, in his exclamation—"Blessings on the man that invented sleep". In seriousness, we may say, if the poetic metaphor of sleep for death had a single inventor, he deserved well of humanity.

The course that I am disposed to take in following out the present inquiry has been already shown in what I have elsewhere written on the subject ; and I am not going here to repeat myself, except in a mere allusive summary.

It is necessary for me to recall only this much, namely, that I believe the definition of Poetry should be preceded by a consideration of Fine Art in general ; and that the province of Art is best approached by a review of the emotions appealed to, commonly designated the feelings of the Beautiful, but admitting of being analyzed into certain more elementary feelings of the mind which I have endeavoured to specify. These feelings are essentially pleasurable. Fine Art is, by the law of its being, productive of pleasure ; only, its pleasures are a select class, with peculiarities that entitle them to be regarded as elevating and refined, in comparison with our other pleasures, for example, those of the inferior senses. Art is contrasted with Utility, in the acceptance of supplying our ordinary wants, and saving us from injuries and pains ; it assumes that we are physically provided for, and proposes to enhance our existence by superadded enjoyments not connected with mere physical well-being. Art is further in contrast with Science, for reasons that will have to be noticed. There is still another contrast, trenching on debated ground,—namely, with Morality or Duty.

If Fine Art as a whole is adequately defined, the species Poetry is definable by supplying the *differentia*—Language. The distinction between Poetry and the other members of the Art genus is notable and far-reaching, but the sole foundation is in the use of speech as the instrument. It is by employing the common medium of mutual understanding between man and man, the medium of our closest sympathies, and the medium of our highest knowledge of the world, that Poetry so easily oversteps its province, and slides into the functions of directing, persuading, and instructing mankind,—functions that the painter, sculptor, architect, or musician do not often arrogate to themselves.

So much for a review of the modes of approaching the definition of Poetry. I will endeavour to give sharpness to the outline now sketched, by fastening on a few of the moot points, or implicated problems, of poetical criticism.

FUNCTION OF LANGUAGE.

Let us take first the questions connected with the specifying character—Language. We may have Art and Art emotions, without language; but not poetical Art. We may gaze with rapture on a gorgeous sunrise; yet if we refrain from putting our feelings into words, we are not exemplifying poetry, nor, indeed, as yet, any Art. By an easily incurred fallacy, this situation is often considered a poetical one. It is so only by the licence of stating the part as the whole, the beginning as the consummation. Without the emotional susceptibility to start with, a man cannot be a poet; yet, until the feelings have been embodied in expression, they have not attained to poetry. The inarticulate susceptibility may go the length of assimilating the object in view with those other objects that harmonize with it, and that raise it from a literal object of the senses, to an object of æsthetic feeling. The personifying impetus, which, when applied to the face of inanimate nature, makes up such a large part of our poetry, may operate in the mind of a spectator, without any verbal expression whatever; it does thus operate in all of us, when we simply give way to our susceptibilities without evoking the response of our word-faculty. This is just half way to poetry; there is needed another advancing movement of mind, as co-essential to the final effect.

The direct function of language in this situation would be to put another in possession of the object that inspires ourselves; to give an adequate description of the literal effect, by the perfection of verbal resources for that end. The masses of colour in a grand sunrise might be brought within the conceptive power of others, who would be thus brought into the position of

the spectator (allowing for the inferiority of the most vivid description). Nay, more: language could give the assimilating object that wakens up the deeper emotion; indeed, language has a peculiar advantage here, which makes one of the high prerogatives of the poetic art. Homer in giving the descent of Apollo, in answer to the prayer of his priest, could put us in possession of the poetizing comparison—he came “like Night”. A painter or sculptor has no such resource. This is the first great advance towards poetry in composition. In like manner, language has the means of making poetizing *contiguities* as well as similarities, putting things together in such juxtaposition, that, by acting together in the mind, they educe emotions not belonging to the perception of them separately. As in Milton’s survey of the world from the mount of temptation:—

*Huge cities and high-towered, that well might seem
The seats of mightiest monarchs.*

The juxtaposition of the idea of monarchical residence heightens the effect of the literal prospect as defined by the epithets “huge” and “high-towered”. The painter can also produce effects of juxtaposition, as when he gives effects of sky and light to chime in with a given scene. This does not detract from the poet’s power; it only deprives him of the monopoly that he has in the previous case.

Thus, by various and far-reaching similitudes, by well-chosen groupings or contiguities, language, in the hands of a master, converts mere susceptibilities of feeling and intellectual workings into something that transcends nature and becomes art. One other step remains to be taken; but that is a mighty one. I mean, of course, the power of language itself as an instrument of emotion and pleasure. I must abstain from analyzing the music of speech in general, and the influence of metre or verse in particular. It is enough to remark that, taken alone, this element can be so handled as to impart pleasurable thrills of

notable intensity, and such pleasure is reckoned as truly æsthetic in its kind. By its kinship to the other æsthetic feelings that we have adverted to, it strikes a chord in harmony with these, and so yields the highest form of æsthetic delight. On the other hand, should the expression not bring out a fine cadence in itself, and, still more, should it operate as a discord with the subject, it de-poetizes the other elements; the last end is thus worse than the first. The language used can rarely be indifferent to a highly-pitched conception; hence the opinion that verse is essential to poetry; the march of verse being of itself the sign of a certain emotional intensity. Still, as metre or verse is only one form of language impressiveness,—as our English prose style has been cultivated into modes of expressing very varied emotions with perfect suitability, so much so that good prose is far better than bad verse,—it cannot be affirmed with any defensible propriety that nothing is poetry but what is clothed in the metrical garb.

Thus, then, we have made our way through the succession of steps whereby an æsthetic feeling in the presence of some great scene of nature has at last become poetry. The mere thrill of the susceptible mind in view of a gorgeous sunrise is a first start, but only a start: mark now the consummation, and all the other steps that have led to it:—

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-top with sovereign eye.

Again—

Now morn, her rosy steps in th' eastern clime
Advancing, sow'd the earth with orient pearl.

We might extend the illustration by citing the thunder-storm, as it simply affects the senses, and wakens up emotions thereby; and then by viewing it as embodied in Byron's description. It is æsthetic in the first stage; but only in the second, is it rendered into poetry.

Language, in these three examples, is in the full discharge of all its poetizing functions; it assimilates and groups the things whose coalition is necessary to æsthetic thrill: it is farther adapted, according to its peculiar musical laws, to add its own modicum of æsthetic pleasure, and to crown the whole with the specifically artistic effect of harmony.

There are many occasions when the employment of verse, even although skilful to admiration, does not make poetry. I pass by the rules of Latin grammar, the mnemonic lines of the syllogism, and similar strokes of ingenuity, which choose the medium of verse from the incident of its being licensed to abbreviate for the sake of compactness. I would refer to some of Pope's striking couplets in his expository and didactic poems. I think that, in these, the metrical form is given to subjects in themselves unpoetical; and the intention is rather to impress the mind, as an expositor would, than to raise it into the regions of æsthetic pleasure. The figures of speech, and other arts for rousing attention by the force of suspense, as epigram, interrogation,—are in that debateable margin between poetry and energetic exposition, where we ought not to make any dogmatic affirmation either way. It is easy to produce from Pope perfect, consummated, and typical poetry; place, by the side of these, specimens of his energetic, compact versification, where he condenses a proverb, a maxim, or a sarcasm, and the interval between the two is apparent to the most untutored sense.

Illustrations will be given under the head following.

CONTRASTS TO POETRY.

We shall now carry out the elucidation of Poetry by means of its contrasts: namely, Science, Oratory, Morality, and Religion.

To begin with SCIENCE.

So marked is the opposition of Poetry and Science that an occasional overlapping of the two departments can never obscure it. The scientific expositor may, as Plato frequently

does, introduce an ornamental illustration such as would be in place in a poem ; but this does not make the science poetry. So there are, in the wide domains of Science, genuine poetic effects, more especially of the grand and sublime, as in astronomy and cosmical philosophy ; but the man of science is not therefore a poet. He does not aim at giving those effects, except as so much by-play, to relieve the hardness and the rigour of genuine scientific work. A great stroke of generalization like Newton's gravity is sublime and imposing ; but such is not the primary intention of the scientific discoverer. The astronomer, geographer, geologist, mineralogist, botanist, zoologist, divide among them the whole field of the universe, apart from the human mind ; but they relegate to the man of Art the bringing out of Artistic effects. The psychologist overtakes the region of mind ; yet his handling does not lead him into poetry.

The only real confusion in this contrast arises from the overweening pretensions put forward by the poet, and by others on his behalf ; as when it is said that he alone of men penetrates into the "central truth of things". Now the artist may be a very close observer of the face of nature and of the human mind ; he may also be a bold generalizer, and may make guesses at hidden truth ; yet his drawbacks are,—that his observations have an æsthetic bias, that his generalities have the same, that he does not verify either the one or the other, and, worst of all, that he states, without qualification, what needs to be qualified in order to be any way near the truth.

In the following lines, Pope is in every sense a poet.

So Zembla's rocks (the beauteous work of frost)
 Rise white in air, and glitter o'er the coast ;
 Pale suns, unfelt, at distance roll away,
 And on the impassive ice the lightnings play ;
 Eternal snows the growing mass supply,
 Till the bright mountains prop th' incumbent sky :
 As Atlas fixed, each hoary pile appears,
 The gathered winter of a thousand years.

The next passage is merely science or doctrine in energetic phraseology, compacted into verse.

For forms of government let fools contest,
 Whate'er is best administered, is best.
 For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,
 His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

No doubt, if the absence of necessary qualifications were enough to make poetry, this would answer the test.

The definition of Poetry is put to a severer test in the contrast with ORATORY, Eloquence, or the arts of Persuasion. Oratory has in all ages availed itself of the poetic style, and the poet often takes up an oratorical theme. In order to extricate this combination, we should secure beforehand a clear definition of Oratory. This, I think, is not very difficult. The meaning of Persuasion is influencing man to act or refrain from acting. It extends beyond specific occasions to a general cultivation of the disposition; it is thus an instrument in our education as to our duties. It has its own means of working, apart from either science or poetry, but it often avails itself of both without becoming the one or the other. The complications thus arising are considerably beyond what occurs in the case of Science; and must be approached by guarded steps.

The main object of a poem, says Mr. Alfred Austin, is "*to move and to please*". It is from the same tendency to include active stimulation with pleasure proper, that Lyric Poetry is often regarded as the purest type. It often lends itself to oratorical occasions, and becomes a compound more effective, more rousing, than either oratory or poetry standing alone. Shelley is said by Principal Shairp to be greatest in his Lyrics, and the effect is attributed in part to his "impassioned eloquence" in enforcing some sentiment or theme. Gray's *Bard* is the oratory of unmeasured denunciation, dressed in poetic garb. The splendid passage in the *Castle of Indolence*, commencing—

Ah ! what avail the largest gifts of heaven,
 When drooping health and spirits go amiss ?
 How tasteless then whatever can be given ?
 Health is the vital principle of bliss,
 And exercise of health. In proof of this,
 Behold the wretch, who slugs his life away,
 Soon swallow'd in disease's sad abyss ;
 While he whom toil has braced, or manly play,
 Has light as air each limb, each thought as clear as day.

belongs to a high order of persuasive address, to which the poetic arts lend their assistance.

Let us take a great orator like Chatham or Burke, whose staple is the usual arts of persuasion, both by argument and by appeal to the feelings. In argumentative oratory, there is as little poetry as there is in science ; the cases are about on a par. In what is called an "Appeal to the Feelings," there is a good deal of ground common to the orator and the poet. To rouse indignation, for example, there must be a highly specific and concrete presentation of the circumstances ; just as when the poet has to stir up the feeling of sublimity, or of pathos, or any other typical æsthetic feeling. Hence poets have supplied some exquisite examples of truly oratorical appeal ; I need but cite the Mark Antony oration. That is, of course, viewed by us as a piece of poetry, and not improperly so, from the highly poetic arts employed in it. But it is also a fine example of what we might call imaginative oratory. Given the situation as conceived by the poet, the means are purposely adapted to the end. I am not sure that, in the actual situation, it would have been successful ; I cannot say that the poet gauged the Roman mob, as one of their own orators would have done ; for aught I know, his finest touches might have miscarried in the real encounter. This much, however, I venture to affirm, that it would be an enormous aid to any orator, to have one fourth of the poetic power shown in that passage.

In the other mode of introducing effects of Fine Art, namely, to lavish poetic figures, illustrations and pictures,

the orator gains the attention and the favour of his audience by the pleasure that he thereby imparts ; but, at the same time, he incurs a danger that we shall soon see more of ; he is playing pleasantly on an instrument, and his hearers enjoy his performance and do nothing more. The most powerful oratory for practical influence more frequently works by *pain*, makes us uncomfortable until we do what the orator wishes ; as when we are frightened with the prospect of bad consequences to ourselves, or when our sympathies are harrowed with the sufferings of others. Such was the Demosthenic oratory.

John Bright's famous utterance on the breaking out of the Russian war, is a fine instance of poetry intensifying the effect of oratory, without appearing as poetry in the sense of pleasure or charm. In his speech, deprecating the war, Mr. Bright, adverting to the frightful loss of life that was inevitable, exclaimed—"The angel of death is among us"; and amid the breathless silence of the house, he added, "I can hear the rustling of his wings". The form of the innuendo was eminently poetical ; but instead of operating in the poetic direction, of giving pleasure or relieving pain, it intensified tenfold the horror which his oratory aimed at producing—the horror of incurring the consequences of war.

Chatham's oratory could also supply such effects, as in the well-known passage on the tracking of the Indians with bloodhounds.

In the great anti-slavery crusade, the oratorical appeals to the nation were charged with the most repulsive horrors ; witness the highly rhetorical speeches of Brougham.

Hood's "Song of the Shirt" is oratory of the same powerful type.

Compare these with Burke's fine, but fulsome, passage on the Queen of France, and we shall feel the difference. That passage is now looked upon as merely fine writing, poetry in prose, and it scarcely ever was anything else.

The realistic treatment of Death, by Young, is, by its unpoetical horrors, fit only for oratory.

The knell, the shroud, the mattock, and the grave,
The deep, damp vault, the darkness, and the worm.

Compare the redeeming softness of the "Angel of Death".

Mr. Gladstone, defending the peace with the Boers against those that would have had them more severely chastised previously—speaking, doubtless, in the presence of many who had relatives in our African regiments,—exclaimed, "Would you first have more of your sons made to pass through the fire to Moloch?" Holbein's *Dance of Death* is not more charged with realistic horror. It has the force of pictured eloquence.

But the illustration of this point is more pregnant in the next contrast that I have to work—Poetry and MORALITY. The poet is especially set before us as a great moral teacher.

Of the various ways that the poet can act as a moral teacher, I presume the chief is, his power to attract us by depicting high ideals of nobleness. A prose writer may do the same, but not with the same charm, and consequently with less efficacy. The serious question then comes—How far are men made better by such ideals? What success has ever attended them? This would involve a wide examination of ancient and modern poetry, and would probably end in nothing. For, in the first place, few poets depart sufficiently from the main object of poetry, which is undoubtedly pleasure, to study exclusively the moral improvement of their readers. They know the danger they run of being neglected, and this no poet can afford. They will provide striking pictures of goodness, which we all like to contemplate, provided we are not called upon to imitate them. Our natural weakness is to unite noble ideals with ignoble practices; and although, now and then, we are caught hold of by an ideal, it is not so often from poetry, as

from sober history, or still soberer observation of what passes before us. Moral teaching is strictly a branch of oratory, and may be helped out by poetry, but, in the union, the poetry may displace the oratory.

But perhaps the most pointed handling of this vast problem will consist in examining the pretensions of poetry in this direction, as stated by poets themselves and their critics. This I will take at a later stage.

The contrast with RELIGION is the most difficult to express of any. The amount of coincidence between the two has been very various; in some cases nearly total, and in others comparatively slight.

The peculiarity of Religion that places it in direct contrast with poetry is a supernatural government by rewards and punishments. According as this idea is deeply felt, in all its seriousness, the poetic treatment is kept at a distance. Bishop Butler's dying utterance—"What an awful thing to appear before the Moral Governor of the World!"—expresses the religious feeling in its full solemnity, and is too deep for poetry.

CHOICE OF SUBJECTS.

In working out the definition of poetry in its contrasts with Science, Eloquence, Morality, and Religion, we have so far endeavoured to reach its specific peculiarities; yet the treatment is too brief for the difficulties of the case. Another means of elucidation is open to us. Poetry is not self-dependent, it must always have a subject. And although some subjects are more suited to its handling than others, yet every one may admit of an unpoetical as well as a poetical treatment. A new series of complications grows out of the circumstance that what we call a poem is really a mixed composition: the mere fact of mixture operating in a variety of

ways, and not seldom to the confusing of the poetical element with something else.

We are very familiar with the combination of the useful and the ornamental; as in Architecture—which considers, on the one hand, what is suitable for our wants and conveniences, and on the other, how to please our art emotions. So, in dress, we seek both comfort and decoration. Likewise in style; a hard scientific subject, or a dry economical address, may be accompanied and relieved by pleasing illustrations.

Our difficulties here grow out of a deeper complication. Instead of a lifeless or uninteresting subject being enlivened by an artistic addition, we may have in the subject itself, a certain amount of interest of the very kind that art contributes. Such subjects are naturally preferred by an artist when he has a choice. The dressmaker delights in a fine person. Accordingly, in all the arts (Poetry included), a difference is recognized between things that lend themselves to artistic handling, and those that either do not give any such assistance, or do the very opposite.

There are certain subjects that positively refuse poetical aid. Everything loathsome by nature; everything painfully useful; everything that inspires revulsion and horror from whatever cause; everything ignoble and contemptible,—must be left on one side. We admit pain on condition of its being redeemed by the poetic treatment, as in Tragedy. But there are horrors that we must suppose absolutely unredeemable. Butchery of human beings on the large scale—the conquests of the Mongols, the exterminating wars of Rome, the Lisbon earthquake, the black hole of Calcutta, famines and plagues and conflagrations,—would seem beyond the scope of poetry. The disastrous Charge of the Six Hundred horse was redeemable in a partial degree.

The most frequent of all poetic subjects is NARRATIVE, or story,—the ongoings of our own kindred—*quidquid agunt homines*. Now, to narrate is an art by itself; it works by laws of

its own, and involves skill in the narrator. We may have a plain narrative well told from the historian's point of view; we may have the same subject poetically adorned, the poet being now narrator and poet in one. It does not follow that the properly narrative part is well done, because it is converted into poetry; although the poet is easily led to suppose that he is as good in narrative proper, as he may be in poetical ornament.

But this is not the worst snare to be encountered. A narrative subject may have an independent interest of the very kind that the poetic art in its purest examples delights to afford. The feelings of sublimity and pathos are pre-eminently feelings evoked by Art, and if they can be produced by a composition devoid of poetical adornment, they are still welcome. Now, many narratives inspire such feelings, although so bald and simple as not to be confounded with poetry in the smallest degree. The remark was made by Sir G. Cornwall Lewis that the account of the battle of Marathon could not be perused for the hundredth time without emotion. So grand and inspiring was the barest relation of the incidents, that nothing more was needed to fill the mind with the sublime of heroism and devotion. Now, these are the very sentiments whose production would be regarded as a triumph of art. Nevertheless, the poetical treatment came to be superadded. In the Grecian Drama, as, for example, in the *Persæ* of Æschylus, the highest poetic genius was expended in still farther intensifying the emotions inseparable from the plainest narration of the facts.

If a second example is necessary, Greece can furnish it. In one of the speeches of Lysias, we have the recital of the heroic attitude of Socrates in confronting the Thirty Tyrants; and in the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon we learn how he stood out against the popular assembly, when urged, as Prytanis, or President, to put an unconstitutional question to the vote. In both instances, we have the moral sublime in a naked recital of the facts. The opening stanza of a well-known Ode of

Horace (without apparently having Socrates in view) poetizes both situations with the felicitous brevity of the poet.

Justum et tenacem propositi virum
 Non civium ardor prava jubentium,
 Non vultus instantis tyranni
 Mente quatit solida.

He that is just, and firm of will,
 Doth not before the fury quake
 Of mobs that instigate to ill,
 Nor hath the tyrant's menace skill
 His fixed resolve to shake.

—*Sir Theodore Martin.*

It is needless to multiply examples. Every heroic or noble action, every heroic personage, can be described in unadorned, and also in adorned, language. The emotion is increased by the adornment, but not created. It is easy for a poet, in such circumstances, to remit his poetical handling, and to rest satisfied with the fact that the emotional effects are not remitted; the subject being operative by its unaided influence. Compare the French Revolution as treated in prosaic style, with its treatment by Carlyle. Take also the Roman traditions worked up in Macaulay's *Lays*, and compare the one form with the other.

This last consideration will help us to understand Wordsworth's vacillation as to the nature of poetry. He lighted upon matters of fact so intensely emotional, that poetic handling seemed to be dispensed with, as scarcely contributing anything to the effect. He always observed the metrical form, which is of itself of the nature of poetry; he also used the choicest of the ordinary words that the language afforded for the expression of the fact: very often he did no more. He did not deceive himself into mistaking a lifeless, for a stirring, composition. There was still enough to rouse the intended emotion; and to do this was, in his judgment, to be poetical. Take as an example the odes on "Lucy". There are stanzas heightened

by poetic arts ; others are entirely bald and unadorned, yet not flat or devoid of effect. There is profound pathos, without a particle of poetic elevation beyond the metre, in the lines—

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be ;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me !

The objection to such writing is, not that it does not move us, but that it appears to be within the reach of any one without being a poet. Quite different is the verse immediately preceding—

A violet by a mossy stone,
Half hidden from the eye !
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

Comment upon this is unnecessary.

To quote another short example. "Thoughts too deep for tears," is a memorable stroke of felicitous expression ; "thoughts that drew forth tears" is perfectly hackneyed and easy, although in certain circumstances pathetic.

The greatest poets of antiquity were fully conscious of the difference between interest independent of their treatment, and what was their duty as artists. Virgil and Horace chose interesting subjects ; yet they knew what was requisite besides in order to poetry. In the "Georgics," Virgil never omits an ornamental phrase (Simcox's "Latin Literature," I. 263).

A poet cannot be giving birth to felicities of expression in every line,—he must at times descend to the level of ordinary good diction, while his readers have to be satisfied with the interest of the thought ; yet he must not throw upon his subject, whatever that may be, the whole burden of keeping up the charm.

There still remains an important observation carrying us into the very depths of art. The poetic narrator may appear

to be using language not a whit more elevated than an unpoetical historian; while still there may be something in the poet's way of bringing forward the facts that we do not find in the other. Allow that Wordsworth often gives us pages without a stroke that Mr. Austin would call "transfiguration," he yet tells a story remarkably well. What interest is in it he brings out, not merely by well-chosen, although common expressions, but by his manner of selecting and arranging the incidents. Of all merits, this is the one most difficult to make apparent—either in criticism or in teaching. The reader is satisfied with the effect without knowing the secrets of it. He does not, for example, know that the poet's delicate judgment has made omissions that would not have been made by a narrator devoid of the poetical sense. As remarked by Burns in connection with conduct—

What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

Before we say of a poet, as Jeffrey of Wordsworth, "This will never do," simply on the ground that he has too seldom ascended the brightest heaven of poetical invention, we must judge of the power of his story as due to selection of circumstances.

A good illustration of the point is supplied by the peculiarly poetic interest of Plot. To a certain extent a historian gives us this interest without thinking of it; his narrative contains it whether he will or not. An artistic narrator develops the interest by studying its conditions, and by suiting the choice and sequence of the facts to these conditions. Hence, it is from a Walter Scott or a Wilkie Collins, and not from an ordinary historian, that we obtain this mode of pleasure at its best.

Another example may be taken from the unfolding and mutual action of character in the Epic and the Drama. Several whole books of Homer are devoid of similes, which are Homer's great instruments of transfiguration. Yet these books receive

the highest praise for other characteristics distinguishing the poet from the mere narrator.

The poet finds, occasionally, that the action can be made so animated and diversified that other interest is unnecessary (Gladstone's "Homer," p. 150). Yet in this we may trace a poet's hand—a power that a mere annalist could not put forth. Selection, omission, and disposition of parts, are as vital to poetry as verbal ornament. The critic has no easy task in disclosing the secrets of this branch of the poetic art. Only the poet himself could tell us all his trials and rejections; the critic and the teacher when dealing with a consummate artist need to imagine what an inferior composer would have done.

At a later stage, we shall have to consider the import of the term "Ideality," as applied to Poetry and Art, which will afford an opportunity of making the foregoing remarks somewhat more telling.

Take next another frequent theme of poetry—DESCRIPTION of Nature, both the external world and the world of mind. The geographer, the topographer, the naturalist, are rivals in this undertaking. And a great geographer, like Humboldt, describing the grandeurs of natural scenery, produces upon the minds of his readers the emotions most proper to art—emotions so genuinely artistic, that the artist desires nothing beyond. Yet a poet, to be a poet, must do something more. Happy in the intrinsic force of his subject, he must impart an additional charm from his own special handling. He may occasionally pause, and relieve the strain of invention, by falling to the level of a geographer who merely wields the common unadorned style. The greatness of the subject will tide him over short intervals of flatness of expression; but he must not forget himself too long. As remarked under Narrative, he may still be exercising the less obtrusive devices of his art; the careful selection and omission of descriptive circumstances, rendering his com-

position effective without brilliant or distinguishing strokes of the transfiguring kind.

Leigh Hunt furnishes an apposite example from Natural History, in the treatment of the lily. A gardener and a botanist would each describe it in their own terms, which would be perfectly plain and prosaic, but yet reflecting the intrinsic interest of the subject. The poet might adopt these, and be content. Poets have not stopped at this point. With Spenser, it is the "lady" of the garden; with Ben Jonson—

The plant and flower of *light*.

Farther, the poet frequently adopts TRUTH as a subject: under which is included not simply hard science, which is rarely suitable for his purpose, but also doctrinal views of the more popular kind in all matters that interest the ordinary mind. Enough has been said on the contrast of poetry and science strictly so called; but the illustration of the points already brought forward needs to be carried a little further.

We find in the writings of critics such remarks as these:—"Truth of every kind belongs to the poet, provided it can bud into any kind of beauty" (Leigh Hunt). A great poet, whatever his ideas may be, must work "under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth" (Mr. Arnold). The general principle is incontestable, but the applications are not always free from difficulty.

There is first the question as to the kind of truth that readily lends itself to poetic handling. Here, as in narrative, the poet likes to have a subject that has a sustaining interest of its own, so as to carry the reader forward when the poetic aids are intermitted. This does not apply to all kinds of truth. Moreover, some truths are even repugnant to the emotions of poetry,—their value lying in their useful applications, and not in their æsthetic interest. Political economy has been called a "dismal" science, because its doctrines are unpalatable in the

statement, however valuable as guidance. Thomas Campbell regards the optical explanation of the rainbow as anti-poetical. On the other hand, the grandeurs of Astronomy are half way to poetry, before the poet puts his hand to them.

The poet and the scientific man cannot travel long together. Science, to fulfil its vocation, must be precise; this needs limitations, qualifications, and often numerical statements, which freeze up poetry. Plato is said to have given a poetical philosophy; but when he was most scientific, he abandoned the poetic dress. It is in the popular departments of science,—as Ethics, Politics, *Æsthetics*,—that least resistance is offered to the poetic handling. These are also practical sciences of great human interest, and for this reason they are seized hold of in poetry.

A serious incompatibility remains. The poet, when he finds a truth not to his liking, forthwith derides, evades, or perverts it. If the scientific man remonstrates, he is called a "black-browed sophist," he is "foul with sin" (Tennyson); he is denounced as one that could "peep and botanize upon a mother's grave" (Wordsworth). The fallacy of the Stoics, that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," finds favour with our poets. In the zeal to make the external world more poetical, even the stars are tampered with; the fiction of sphere-music is adopted and improved upon, until we reach the gorgeous Shakespearian lines—

"Not a star that thou beholdest . . ."

Excepting as a bad example, this does no harm. Tennyson's attempts to disparage geology by his poetic indignation may be seen in *In Memoriam*, 118.

Leigh Hunt tells us:—"A true poet is by nature a metaphysician; far greater in general than metaphysicians professed. He feels instinctively what the others get at by long standing." To laud the power of instinct is a most agreeable flattery; it relieves us from the pains of laborious research.

The kind of science or doctrine that plays the greatest part as a subject of poetry, is what bears upon human life in its manifold aspects—upon politics, morality, and the theory of right living. Political saws are very frequent matter for poetic allusion. They abound in great poets from Shakespeare to Tennyson. The proper relations of ruler and subjects, the duties and the rights of each, frequently come up in connection with epic and dramatic themes. These have an interest in themselves, from their relation to human well-being; and a poet may trust to their aid for carrying the reader on, during the intervals when his art is in abeyance.

It is generally easy to pronounce on what occasions doctrines are properly admitted into poetry; whether they are shaped for poetical effect, and whether or not they are assisted by the poet's own art. There is poetry in the lines of Goldsmith—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

This is a welcome sentiment, poetically expressed. The inferior orders of society are pleased and flattered to be told of the flimsy tenure of "princes and lords". Nevertheless, very little discernment is necessary to show its want of truth; much more than a breath is necessary to make princes and lords.

Tennyson also abounds in political commonplaces, often exquisitely touched, but without being made more scientifically true.

More usual still is it for poets to introduce MORALITY, or the principles of moral right and wrong, to enhance the interest and the worth of their compositions. This is perfectly admissible, on the understanding that the morality is not the poetry; although the union of the two makes a highly meritorious work—

just as the union of poetry and abstract science would be, if, as can seldom happen, the two were reconcilable. A poet that can carry along with him an intensely interesting subject, and give it a full poetical treatment, is necessarily greater than one that bestows the same degree of poetic force on a neutral or indifferent subject.

The first and simplest of moral applications is to deal out justice to persons according to the received moral standard. The ordinary novelist must do this to be tolerated. It belongs to the art of pleasing the audience addressed. It was incumbent on Homer, so far as his story allowed. Scott is usually a master of the proprieties of poetic justice.

A poet may take a higher flight, and make his poem purposely moral: that is, he may shape his characters and incidents with the express view of setting forth the punishment of vice and the reward of virtue. This was exemplified in many of the ancient tragedies; the greatest modern instance is Dante. Such works are not poems simply; they are more or less successful combinations of moral preaching with poetry, neither of which attains perfection under such a plan. The compound is fascinating from the circumstance, already adverted to, that a poetical morality is not intended for practice.

The poet's loftiest aim, in connection with moral good and evil, is to grapple with the anomalies of good men made to suffer and bad men becoming triumphant. In adopting incidents from actual life, such difficulties are not to be glossed over by the idealizing process. This was the theme of the ancient tragedy, and has drawn forth the most powerful strains of poetic inspiration and originality. Apart from such a splendid result, it would scarcely be a proper subject for poetry: it deviates too far from the condition of being agreeable. Had Shakespeare, however, never undertaken tragic themes, we should not have known the compass of his genius. Nevertheless, these subjects

must be considered exceptional; they should be chosen only because of the poetic merits that they give birth to.

Different from all these modes of introducing moral themes, although freely intermingling with them, is the employment of poetry as Life-guidance, and "Life-criticism," a phrase invented by Mr. Matthew Arnold, and given by him, with certain limitations, as a definition of poetry. That Life-criticism is not the essence, but a valuable adjunct of poetry, and a characteristic of certain poets, for example, Wordsworth, has been abundantly shown by Mr. Austin. But, indeed, we need to study carefully the exemplary instances, in order to know what the phrase exactly means, for, like many other general words applied for the purpose of a definition of poetry, it has a variety of senses.

One meaning of the phrase is given by its author—"How to live". To teach the art of living well is a vast function, requiring immense knowledge of human nature and human life. Now, it would seem natural that whoever aspires to this great undertaking should be disenthralled from the conditions of poetic form, and should give his whole mind to making his directions just and clear. In point of fact, however, the poet has never done more than adopt the received formulas of right living, and put them in an attractive dress. He avails himself of the interest attaching to the great question of how to live, and merely superadds his own treatment to enhance what he does not create. If we were anxious for more specific and literal directions as to the conduct of life, than are furnished by the old common-places; if we wanted some clearer rules to go by, we should gladly dispense with the poetic dress (which is the enemy of precision) and prefer a style as bald as Euclid's, and as technical as Jeremy Bentham's. No man would steer a ship round Cape Horn and across the Pacific by a poetical guide to navigation. But let us see how Wordsworth himself describes the objects that he kept in view.

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope,
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread.

This is noble phraseology, and lifts the imagination above the vulgar routine of life. The first line is a series of qualities to aim at; but they must be viewed emotionally rather than intellectually. "Truth" in the mind of the poet is quite different from truth in science or in practice. "Grandeur" and "beauty" are the distinctive qualities of all art. "Love" is a poet's favourite subject, owing to its intrinsic charm. The idea of "Hope" always captivates us. There is a cumulative charm in the entire collocation; but there is neither direction nor instruction to be obtained from it.

The second and third lines express a high function of poetry, for which mankind will never cease to be grateful. It is the most notable of all the functions included under the vague designation "Life-criticism," or "How to live". "Melancholy fear subdued by faith, and blessed consolations in distress" expresses one of the perennial wants of human life. It is not exactly telling us how to live; although indirectly affording us assistance in right living.

If we lose sight of the fact that Art in general, and poetry in particular, are meant to impart pleasure, as their primary end, we fall into endless confusions. There is, however, a bad association with the name "pleasure" that makes us wish to disconnect it from the noble vocation of the poet. But we have not the like objection to be relieved from melancholy and distress; nevertheless, this can be done only by the same arts that contribute to heighten our enjoyment, when we are already in some degree happy. To make the distressed more so, and to plunge the happy or the neutral into distress, would not be a good work. Far better than Life-criticism or Life-guidance would be a definition of poetry that took the two lines above

quoted for the key-note. Poetry, whether or not it criticises life, should use its peculiar resources to make us less miserable or more joyous. As relief in depression, as consolation in sorrow, as an antidote to the ills of life,—poetry has been welcomed from its birth. What would be the worth of grandeur or beauty, were it not to make life more endurable and more buoyant? If the poet performs any other function at the same time,—if he instructs us in the laws of things, if he directs our paths when we are in difficulty,—all these are superadded functions, and must not displace the primary requisite of contributing to our enjoyment or lessening our misery.

We recognize, then, the general fact, that Poetry, as a Fine Art, is pain-allaying and pleasure-imparting. By what innumerable devices it accomplishes this high vocation, the entire compass of Rhetoric alone can tell. But with a view to the settlement of the disputed border-land of poetry and life-guidance, we need to remark that poetry has certain specific ways of operating, and takes more especially in hand a certain class of pains to be alleviated. First, however, let us complete the comment on Wordsworth's lines. The fourth—"Of moral strength and intellectual power"—is not suggestive of anything peculiar. The novel point lies in the fifth:—"Of joy in widest commonalty spread". Here we have a very notable moral idea—the finding of our pleasure in the pleasure of others. It does not directly imply self-sacrifice, but it involves a regard to the welfare of a wide surrounding circle. If poetry is able to help in this object, it is more than pleasure-giving, or than distress-alleviating; it fosters social duty, which is what the moral teacher in all ages has been striving to accomplish. So vital is this operation, that we excuse any man, whatever his principal function may be, for stepping aside even from that function, if he can promote the other. Yet it is by no means the express duty of the poet; and is not accounted so by poets generally. Fine Art pleasures in general have one ennobling

distinction, that they can be enjoyed by mankind generally, and are not monopolized and exhausted by a few, as is the case with some pleasures. This circumstance is connected with the very material of Art, and is not due to any intention on the part of the artist.

To return now to a main function of poetry, the contributing to our joys, and the alleviating of our griefs. We need not even summarize the means of bringing about these ends; it is enough to advert to the most paradoxical of these, namely, the employment of subjects absolutely painful. Many of Wordsworth's narrative poems are tragical, not to say harrowing; while they seldom rise to the heights of tragic art, they are not redeemed by anything in the treatment. One justification might be given, on the purely moral ground. He might say that it was good for us to have our sympathies awakened towards human distress, instead of being wrapped up in our own comfort and immunity. Now a poet may, undoubtedly, undertake this work, but it is not a poetical duty, and will not be a substitute for poetical arts. A more relevant apology is this. In deep sorrow, it is better to go into the house of sorrow than into the house of rejoicing; and the salutary effect is more likely to be produced by a poetic handling of misery, than by a too literal picture. The heroism of endurance, the solution of moral difficulties, and all the circumstances that attract us to a tale of calamity, can be effectively embodied in a work of poetic genius; nevertheless, the genius is essential.

As to moralizing generally, this is the professional work of the preacher alone. All of us are bound to contribute, according to our opportunities, to make mankind better. Any special claim upon the poet in this respect, is owing to the fact that he has more influence than other men; and that, in his search for themes of intrinsic charm, he often falls upon subjects having ethical bearings. If, then, it be the duty of men generally to take the benevolent, instead of the malevolent, attitude towards

each other ; it is still more the duty of those in positions of influence, as poets undoubtedly are. From the unfortunate propensity of human beings to delight in malignity, a large amount of poetry is devoted to satire and vituperation. Many writers are occupied with exploring the weaknesses and vices of their fellow-men, without doing anything to reform them. Now, as a maxim, not of poetical criticism simply, but of universal duty, we are led to commend Coleridge for his professed "habit of wishing to discover the good and the beautiful in all that meets and surrounds me". If any one is competent to represent humanity and life in its severest and most literal truth, it is a man of science. Only an approximation to truth can be made by a man of language ; and, as the poet always mingles his feelings with his subject, we should wish him to incline to the amiable side. This may not make him more or less of a poet as such ; the highest and most consummate genius may be found on the other side ; but as the author of a mixed composition, where poetry is one part and doctrine another, the value of the doctrine must enter into the merits of his work. The malevolent temper of Pope and of Byron may not have detracted from their poetic force. Possibly, if they had assumed a more amiable turn, their invention would not have answered so well to that stimulus. Their harsh views simply abate from their worth as teachers altogether. On the other hand, the claim may be made for Shakespeare, that he holds a middle course between the extremes of sentimentality and malignity.

A host of difficulties crowd around us when we pass to RELIGION as a subject for poetry. The extremely various aspects of men's religious beliefs would alone complicate the question. The actual experience of poems based on religious themes rather aggravates than alleviates our perplexity.

The loftiest poetical embodiment of religious sentiment and doctrine is the Psalm or Hymn, considered as part of the divine

revelation. The sincere worshipper conceives of this as purely religion, the poetry being a mere incident. The thought seems to him everything, and the dress of itself nothing.

It is the same with the prophetic books, all conceived in a lofty strain of expression, but yet not looked upon as made by human art, or regulated by laws of composition equally applicable to uninspired works. So also with the incidental utterances of more than ordinary fervour scattered everywhere through the sacred writings.

Again, in the words of warning and reproof, there may be an elevation of language, of the true oratorical kind, fitted to rouse, deter, and reform the guilty.

In Religion, as in every other subject, love, affection, amity, is the highest kind of emotion, and poetry is accommodated to its expression in the relationships of human beings, whether with one another, or with the Deity.

The element of wrath, vengeance, and tragic infliction is equally essential in poetry, and is equally furnished by inspired authors. The Old Testament abounds in this interest, which has always been found to lend itself to the highest poetical expression, and to come home to the minds of men. As embodied more especially in war, conflict, struggle, and victory, the interest can be supplied by the incidents and the language of sacred literature.

The New Testament theology, being much less charged with the wrathful and vindictive element, is on that account less amenable to poetic treatment of the same wide and varied interest.

The more especial difficulty in the way of religion, as a subject, is the intangible nature of the supernatural powers. The pagan poets felt this difficulty less; they humanized their deities, and gave them form and physical personality; a licence not granted to the poet of Christianity.

As *Paradise Lost*, if not in itself the greatest religious poem

in existence, is certainly one of the two greatest, we may see from it both the capabilities and the drawbacks of religion as a poetical subject. Homer's *Iliad* being the greatest epic of the ancient world, it became a study for whoever would aim at an epical success, and was fully present to Milton's mind in its minutest details. There must be a stirring action, high passions, and great actors : all which can be brought out only in a mighty conflict, or series of conflicts, that is to say, a vast military campaign,—a combination of contests on the field, with verbal disputative encounters. So far Milton copies the *Iliad*, with allowance for the differences of his subject. His extraordinary success, notwithstanding occasional slips, in handling supernatural combatants in the unparalleled struggle that he has to portray, has been fully admitted. His poetic arts and sustained grandeur of diction appear to be little if at all beneath the magnitude of his theme. At any rate, he has produced passages (episodes) that realize everything we could expect of a poet's genius in such a field.

Now comes the one serious drawback, the inevitable weakness of the daring attempt. The theme is the all-comprehensive tragedy of the human race ; the misfortune that contains in itself the sum-total of all the ills and miseries that have made man to mourn throughout his entire history. A tragedy so unspeakable is too crushing for the redeeming power of poetry ; and, if it were represented in its unsparing fulness, the recital could not be endured. It is true that Milton sets forth the work of Redemption, but we cannot help feeling that the remedy is only a partial one : there is still an enormous overplus of misery due to the tempter's success over the first pair. Indeed, while Milton keeps out of sight, as much as possible, all the realism of the transaction, in order that his poetry may seem adequate to the topics embraced, he is still aware that an enormous difficulty is before him—that the problem of the Divine permission of evil is inseparable from the theme, and that something must be done to mitigate or palliate its rigours.

Well, a great and crushing doctrinal difficulty weighs upon us most when we are in a depressed mood; hence any cheering or elevating influence may help us to overcome it: of such influences, one of the most effective is furnished by the poetical art. When, however, the difficulty has taken hold of our understanding, and assumed the form of a glaring opposition to some of our most assured convictions, it needs to be met by intellectual processes—by discussion, reasoning, or argument. Now this is not adapted for the poetical form; and, when attempted by poets, is usually not a success; the result is neither good reasoning nor good poetry. Accordingly, Milton's metaphysical debates (Book III., 90-134) have been always reckoned unsuitable to his poem; being not poetry, but severe discussion, pertaining to the work of a Theological professor. Pope did not take warning from the example, and repeated the attempt "to vindicate the ways of God to man," in a poem; what he really did was to give his unequalled conciseness of metrical expression and forcible illustration to the cut and dry arguments of a received philosophy.

Pattison's examination of *Paradise Lost* in his Milton ("Men of Letters" Series) is a full discussion of the suitability of the theme to Milton's genius, and may be recommended as an admirable lesson in the definition of Poetry.

POETRY AS IDEAL.

The distinctive characteristic of poetry, as setting forth IDEALS, has been assumed, and partly illustrated, throughout the foregoing remarks, but yet deserves a more special handling with a view to the definition that we are in quest of.

Ideality is contrasted with Reality—that is, with facts as they actually occur. To idealize is to depart from the actual, so as to present a picture more acceptable to our feelings. The painter chooses a scene of nature, containing many beauties, but also some things that mar the effect; these last

he omits from the picture. The most heroic man has points that either clash with his heroism, or are simply indifferent to it ; a poetical narrator avoids all such.

Nothing could better confirm our general position, that the end of poetry is to please, than this habit of altering reality to conform to an ideal. If the poet's so-called "truth" were matter-of-fact truth, he would not dare to idealize, any more than a scientific geographer could venture on re-casting the plan of the Alps, to make them still more impressive and grand, or than an anatomist could teach the contour of the human body from a Greek statue.

As the highest pleasure attainable through works of Fine Art cannot be reaped from literal reproduction of the outer world, the Artist is justified by the end in the choice of his means. It is almost certain that a prosaic narrative of the Trojan war would have been very flat in comparison with the Homeric story. We are better pleased with the gorgeous ideal than we should have been with the actual. Possibly, there might have been a considerable degree of human interest in the literal story, but it would not have been a poem ; the poetical handling saves all that interest, purges it of its dross, if any, and augments it, in a way that only high poetic genius can accomplish.

In gratifying the powerful feelings of the mind, by setting forth their objects in idea, which is all a poet can do, much is obtained by proper selection and omission ; much by illustration, adornment, and happy turns of thought ; but much also by exaggeration. Now, it concerns the critical art to assign the due limits of this exaggeration, under all variety of circumstances. In some cases, it is not productive of the slightest harm ; if it only succeeds poetically, we can easily overlook the departures from literal truth. By the tales of Fairy Land, and the extravagant fictions of middle age Romance, nobody is deceived ; we treat them as efforts of imagination, and judge them

accordingly. When, however, the subjects of Poetry are historical, we object to an excessive falsification of the facts. The demand for truth is still greater, when the subject, historical or not, is meant to embody a practical lesson, whether of morality or of prudential virtue. That high ideals of duty should be presented, we allow and commend; mankind never err on that side. The mischief of exaggeration is chiefly seen in over-stimulating our expectations, and in the indulgence of our amiable weaknesses. The best illustration is furnished by the treatment of the love passion.

It may be said that the greater number of poets have sung of love. Here is a source of natural interest to start from: the subject is peculiarly fitted for the arts of the singer; and is in itself an inspiration. But do poets abide by a truthful handling? do they keep within the bounds of sobriety in stating the power and fruition of love?

Poetry does a great work in evoking the charm of the human affections, and thus extending the sphere of their interest in human life. The temptation is to make up for the want of the real by over-doing the ideal pictures. Thus, to present love in all its force, the disenchanting accessories are left out, or toned down; exceptional states of elation are made the rule; the temporary is given as the permanent. In real life, great pleasures are attended with cost, and often interfere with duty; the poet disregards both circumstances. In nuptial love, there is scope for poetical adornment; and ample justice has been done to the ideal. Whoever wishes a statement of the reality has to refer to sober observation or matter-of-fact biographies. If there be any subject that should dispense with exaggeration, it is love; the literality fairly handled is a sufficient basis of the highest artistic interest.

There being both a spiritual side in the love passion, and a gross or carnal side, poetry can throw its force into either. Dryden is blamed by Wordsworth for knowing only the second.

Shakespeare gives us both. Yet there is always a danger in spiritualizing beyond what human nature can receive, as in the saintly pictures of women, so familiar to us.

Nevertheless, poetry is a great refining influence in one most important way. Those feelings that, in their own nature, are violent and transitory, are filled out and mingled in the poetic treatment, so as to cover a large space in our minds, and so multiply the amount of gratification. The wrath of Achilles in its literal circumstances would yield only a few passing throbs of sympathetic resentment. The Homeric treatment is a fifty-fold enlargement of the interest. The melancholy and beautiful story of Hero and Leander, in a matter-of-fact treatment, would have an undoubted interest; every one feels how much this is increased by the poetical expansion.

Other illustrations could be given of the weak points and dangers of idealizing. Frequently too much is attempted; the mind failing to rise to the height of the poet's fancy: as when affection becomes maudlin; strength, turgidity; indignation, coarse ferocity.

All this, however, is to sin against the laws of poetry itself.

In Poetry and in Painting, we have what is termed the Realistic school, in opposition to the Idealism that transcends actual life; as in the contrast of the Italian and the Dutch masters in painting. A realistic treatment is not withdrawn from the principles of Art elevation: it merely makes the most of a subject with the least possible deviation from literality. A different kind of pleasure is given by this mode of treatment; and the artist has to study the laws of that pleasure, no less than the ideal composer in his sphere.

It is by portraying character and action that the poet draws out the feelings that connect us with our kind; and the idealizing process involves all the arts of omission, selection, addition, that have already more than once been noticed. A certain amount of these transfiguring operations may be

essential to the charm of the picture. The laws of poetic taste, supplementing the instinctive judgment of the poet, determine how far it is safe to go.

The poet has always been permitted to flatter his own nation and race, and all its notabilities, in the grossest way. Pindar's genius shone in this department; it was a part of his vocation. In every age the same thing is repeated. The devices of omission, selection, and disposition of circumstances, together with poetic ornament, are employed to make the most flattering ideals of national heroes and personal favourites, with the correlative depreciation of enemies.

It is considered eminently poetical to set forth "the pomp and circumstance of glorious war," and to shut out of the view the hideous reality. Luckily for mankind, there is a growing revulsion to such an employment of the genius of style.

The *Psalm of Life*, by Longfellow, is a fine example of the moral ideal, intended not merely, nor principally, to indicate the path of duty, but to encourage, stimulate, and support us in the actual performance. This is a genuine poetical attempt, carried out by poetical means. If it is not often efficacious, the fault is less with the poet than with human stubbornness. No doubt, he overstates his case; the struggle to do well is more arduous than he allows; but the amount of license taken has been permitted to poets and preachers in every age.

Poetic truth is a misnomer; it is a play upon words. Truth is truth only when representing the world precisely as it is, and by the help of the technical devices of science. An artist's truth is another name for taste, or propriety; that is, attending to the arts that bring about the poetic charm.

The Ideal justifies itself most in the spheres of the supersensual and the unreal. When we have no actualities to encounter, but only ideals, the shaping of those ideals is every-

thing. It is of little use to idealize upon everyday facts ; to think of a feast when we have no food. But when sorrows are imaginary, as in the forebodings of uncertain futurity, they may yield to the power of a poet's solacement.

The Idealizing process is demanded for the paramount condition of HARMONY, so essential to Art.

It is by harmonizing all the circumstances of a theme, whether narrative, descriptive, moralizing, or life-guiding, that we produce an artistic work. In the literality, many things jar with each other, and with the general effect ; the artist must efface all discords. In real life, an aristocrat may occasionally fall below the proprieties of his type ; a plebeian may rise above his ; the poet and romancist would set both right. It is a kind of paradox to learn that very successful portrayals of class-types have had little personal contact with examples of them. George Eliot gives a public-house colloquy, accepted as true to the life, without having any personal experience of such scenes. Perhaps a literal report of what was said on an actual occasion would seem less truthful than her version. Knowing the characters in general life, she divined what would be most suitable to each, although not exactly corresponding to any single occurrence.

The necessities of Harmony do not imply any great amount of distortion of fact, being fulfilled by the most realistic of poets and artists. To idealize for this end is not merely commendable, it is essential to Art. A painter must group his colours, according to the laws of his art. A poet must see that his language is melodious in itself, and in keeping with his thoughts. He may idealize much or little, but if he fails to harmonize, neither the interest of his story, nor any amount of life-criticism will make him a poet. It is a main part of minute criticism, as abundantly shown in the foregoing Lessons, to inquire into the keeping of images with the subject and

with each other. In such subtle harmonies most frequently consists the poetic thrill.

VERSE.

It has to be seen how far VERSE makes part of the Definition of Poetry. It is when we enter on this question that our attention is most strongly drawn to the peculiar change of mental tone that accords with poetry. In conducting the affairs of life, in science, and even in many forms of persuasive address, we are in a calm, impassive mood; whereas music and poetry are alike calculated to rouse us to a higher, indefinable, strain of emotion. Indeed, it is one of the marks of poetical composition, in its purest type, to be able to put us into this loftier vein of feeling.

Now there is a felt consistency between the march of metre and the tone of mind described as elevation or loftiness of strain. When we rise out of our calm and commonplace moods into a high pitch of emotional excitement, our carriage and mode of expressing ourselves are found to be quite different; and to that difference the language of metre is somehow more suitable than the language of prose. As the words that we make use of by preference are distinguished by strength, intensity, emphasis, so the form or rhythm is peculiar; and though we cannot declaim in verse off-hand, we feel that verse is the form most appropriate to the situation. In the presence of a sublime scene of nature, if we express our feelings in words, they must be words of a high order of majesty and dignity; and if we were able on the spot, we should impart to them a measured rhythm or metre, as most accordant with the feeling that possesses us.

Such is a statement of the fact, with no attempt to assign any reasons arising out of general laws of the mind. That, when our mood is changed from a calm, ordinary pitch, to one of high or intense emotion, the manner of expressing

ourselves should also change, is what might be expected. That, on such occasions, we should choose the words that have been always in use for venting high emotions, is likewise quite natural. But we are without a reason for the choice of metre, except in the fact that metre has, by long usage, become associated with a lofty emotional strain. There, however, remains the question, why metre should have been originally chosen for such occasions, and why it should be retained as intrinsically suitable to poetical feeling. True, something different from common prose is needed; nevertheless the selection of an entirely distinct vocabulary might be accepted as a sufficient change.

There are two circumstances that may be assigned as rendering metre more suitable than prose for the excitement of intense emotion. The first is that, being simpler, we fall into it more easily; we know better how to graduate and adapt our emphasis in pronouncing verse, than in the uncertain accentuation of prose.

Now, it is the nature of excitement to lower our intellectual quality of discriminative selection and adaptation of our movements. In passion, we are more energetic but less capable of delicately adjusting our movements; hence a simple rhythm suits us better than one which is complex: the simplest measures of all, the Lyric, are connected with the greatest intensity of passion. According as we can approach a subject with more calmness, we can accommodate ourselves to greater complication of metre, as in the reflective sonnet.

A second way that metre acts, is in controlling or regulating our passionate excitement. When we are very much roused, our movements are violent, irregular, and transitory; by falling into a set march, the excitement is subdued and prolonged. Metre is like the regularity of the dance, which gives vent to the stimulus of music and society in a measured style; it is an agreeable and yet effective controlling power.

To these considerations may be added the influence on the mind of regular and recurring beats, which yield a pleasure of very extensive occurrence in the Fine Arts.

This being so, let us revert now to the remark already made, that the form of verse has become indelibly associated with the diction and the elevation of poetry. Indeed, so much is this the case, that, whenever we set ourselves to compose in verse, the language that comes to our mind is the language of poetry. Our recollection of words falls into totally different channels from the recollection of prose diction. Many can write better in poetry than in prose; their choicest thoughts and expressions having come to them by reading the poets. This is quite irrespective of an original predisposition to the form of verse, as seen, for example, in Pope.

Verse is not poetry without the accompaniments of a poetic vocabulary, and all the figures and arts that are accounted poetic; such as inversion, ellipsis, exclamation, and other well-known departures from prose. The putting into verse of the ordinary prose style is not poetry. It is often done in comic writing, as in *Hudibras*: the comic effect is obtained by the degradation of the lofty form of poetry to a vulgar use; being an indirect testimony to the intrinsic dignity of the metrical form. We have frequent examples of blank verse intentionally becoming prosaic. This is seen, for example, in Shakespeare, who uses blank verse with unexceptionable propriety, when his subject is familiar and prosaic; in which case, however, he departs from the diction and devices of typical poetry.

Our English Literature has given birth to a species of elevated prose, which is illustrative, both by agreement and by contrast, of the connection of verse with poetry. The grand prose style of Jeremy Taylor, of Milton, and of many more recent writers, as De Quincey, or Carlyle, approaches to poetry in the elevated diction, and in some of the poetical figures, as

inversion, exclamation, interrogation : yet, in stopping short of the form of verse, it also omits the bolder devices of poetry ; such as the licence in the choice of words, the sustained inversions, the free use of ellipsis, the flights of imagination, the play of fancy, the asserting of unqualified and extravagant propositions,—all which are permitted to the poet only in his full metrical garb. The pomp of language is less sustained, even in the loftiest prose, than in typical poetry. Milton alternates his grandest passages, in the prose works, with purely prosaic touches that would not be admissible in a poem.

Dignity, elevation, lofty emotion, have many degrees and many varieties. As we rise ever so little above familiarity and common-place, our attitude and movements change, and with them the choice and rhythm of our speech. A speaker at a public meeting, a judge on the bench, unless when purposely humorous, assume at once an altered tone of gesture and of speech. There is a like transition from the attitude of imparting knowledge to the utterance of high emotions, as admiration, veneration, indignation ; and at the greatest attainable heights in such outbursts, the form of verse, with the becoming adjuncts, will always be found suitable. The Psalms of David were first translated into prose, but did not fully satisfy the feelings of the pious worshipper until re-clothed in verse.

To illustrate the distinction by example, take first the genuinely poetical stanza of Campbell.

Of Nelson and the North
Sing the glorious day's renown,
When to battle fierce came forth
All the might of Denmark's crown.

The metre is here simple and energetic ; the diction lofty, the arrangement inverted and rhetorical ; the poetic type is fully realized.

As a contrasting example of elevated prose, let us cite the following passage from De Quincey.

The silence was more profound than that of midnight ; and to me the silence of a summer morning is more touching than all other silence, because, the light being broad and strong as that of noonday at other seasons of the year, it seems to differ from perfect day chiefly because man is not yet abroad ; and thus, the peace of nature, and of the innocent creatures of God, seems to be secure and deep, only so long as the presence of man, and his unquiet spirit, are not there to trouble its sanctity.

There is here an approximation to poetry, yet with obvious differences. The mind feels much calmer in the perusal, and all the arts of high composition are at a much lower pitch, and yet considerably above ordinary or typical prose.

Quite distinct from the question of verse as more or less essential to poetry, is the consideration of language-music. Melody may accompany verse, or it may not ; it may also be attained in prose. In both cases, it is an additional merit ; and especially so in poetry. Nevertheless, great poets are not uniformly distinguished for melody ; and versification may be very perfect without it. The poet being, above all men, required to give immediate pleasure, must not neglect the point of being melodious : yet some of the greatest poets have been too devoid of a musical ear to infuse the quality into their verse : witness Pope, Johnson, Scott, as contrasted with Milton, Gray, Moore, Tennyson.

THE PROSE ROMANCE.

There remains now only the position of the prose Romance or Novel. Is this poetry or not ? As a question of definition, it resembles cases frequently arising in Natural History, where a species has a large majority of the characteristics of a particular genus, with the absence of several that are of leading importance ; there being, at the same time, no other genus where the species would be more suitably located.

Now, the prose romance has the most prominent characteristics of the Epic in verse. It is an idealized narrative, intended to touch the same emotions, and by similar arts. It

marches at a lower level of intensity, and accommodates itself to our most ordinary moods, in point of emotional strain; thus endeavouring to give as much as possible of the same kind of pleasure with less exhaustion in the end. A novel can be read at two or three sittings: an Iliad or a Paradise Lost would be too fatiguing to be so disposed of. The novel is easy, diluted, and familiar prose; but not, therefore, commonplace. Originality and strokes of genius can occur in the lower strains of feeling, as well as in the higher. The attitude is changed, but not the opportunity of being felicitous.

If we do not stretch the definition of poetry so as to include the prose romance, that peculiar form of composition is without a place in any known classification of literature. It is neither science nor oratory; it is not history, in the proper sense of the word; it is not morality nor theology. If we were to make it a class by itself, we should be repeating nearly all the arts of Poetry, in unfolding its characteristic aims and devices. We have only to allow for the differences due to the form of prose, and for the reasons of adopting the prose vehicle, and there remains to us the substance of poetry. The novel gives us often highly-impassioned prose, thus coming so much nearer to the typical poem, but still divided from that by the distinction between the loftiest prose and the march of verse poetically framed.

Thus, while not obliterating or explaining away the difference that verse makes in composition, we must consider the modern prose romance as a species under the genus Poetry, which must be so far widened as to include it. The form of verse is not to be held as generic and essential to all poetry, but as an important specifying mark in the widest, and perhaps highest class of poetical compositions.

In an exhaustive discussion of poetry, the various recognized species—Epic, Dramatic, Lyric, etc.—would be examined and characterized. This is not indispensable to the definition

of poetry as a whole ; although it would supply many good illustrations of that definition. In all these leading divisions there are cross-divisions, as, for example, the didactic, the serious, and the comic, or satiric ; and something could still be added by way of reconciling this last class with the definition of versified poetry. Indignant denunciation or grave satire may be quite consistent with the march of metre ; but comedy would seem to be such a relaxation of the dignity of the high poetic strain, as to be destructive of the very notion that we have been trying to connect with adequately supported verse. The solution has been already hinted at, and need not be further pursued.*

SUMMARY.

With the assistance of the lessons on the Emotional Qualities of Style, the characteristics of poetry, as now expounded, will, it is hoped, be in some degree intelligible. Nevertheless, the length of the discussion, and the numerous windings that it has taken, with occasional repetitions of the same topic from different points of view, seem to justify one more addition, in the shape of a summary.

1. Poetry is to be reckoned among the Fine Arts ; and possesses the attributes common to the class. These attributes are to be ascertained, in the first instance, with a view to the definition of Fine Art generally.

2. The source of such a definition is to be sought in the sphere of the human emotions ; of which a certain number are properly *Æsthetic*, or Fine Art, Emotions. The governing circumstance is always pleasure ; although often disguised by various accidents, and not unfrequently taking the shape of relief from pain. Nevertheless, all pleasures, and all modes of alleviating pain, are not *æsthetic* ; and the specific marks of such as are so need to be clearly ascertained.

* Much additional insight in connection with the nature of Poetry may be obtained from the full discussion of its leading species in the article " Poetry," by Mr. Theodore Watts, in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*.

3. The characteristic of poetry as a species of Fine Art consists in employing Language as the medium ; on which fact is suspended a numerous host of distinctive qualities. It brings poetry into close connection with all regions of knowledge ; since nearly every kind of knowledge finds embodiment in speech. One consequence is the difficulty of disentangling the purely poetic effects from those belonging to the other species of communicated knowledge.

4. In such a complication, resort is had to contrasting definitions of those several departments that become entangled with poetry. As respects the *matter* these are Science, Eloquence, Morality, Religion. As respects literary *form* we have History, or Narrative, Description, and Exposition ; all which may assume both poetical and unpoetical aspects. Poetry needs a subject, and while imparting its own charm, it avails itself of any accidental advantages that the subject may intrinsically possess for aiding in the effect.

5. While the end of poetry can, with more or less difficulty, be distinguished from the ends of other species of verbal composition, its means can also be distinguished. The Rhetorical art provides a full examination of all the devices, verbal and other, for fulfilling the end of poetry, as such.

6. The scope of poetry is closely implicated with the three great attributes, named, respectively, Concreteness, Harmony, and Ideality, whose meanings, fully understood, go far to confine the poetical art within its legitimate boundaries. The discussion of Ideality, in particular, is specially valuable for showing clearly the difference between poetic and unpoetic form.

7. The element of verse enters into poetry in its purest type. A modified form of the poetic species assumes the garb of prose, and though adapted to a difference of mood in the reader, has yet so much of the essence of poetry as to be more properly included with it, than with any other class of literary compositions.

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